

University College London

**Department of Geography**

# **DECONSTRUCTING THE DIVIDED CITY**

**IDENTITY, POWER AND SPACE IN SKOPJE**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



## **– STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY –**

I, Ophélie Véron, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for any other degree or diploma at any other university. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

## – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS –

Completing a thesis brings many joys, one of which is to remember the colleagues, friends and family who have helped me and supported me along this journey.

I am indebted to my Ph.D. supervisor, Dr. Alan Ingram, for his constant guidance, support, encouragement, motivation and feedback. Although I must admit I sometimes cursed his sharp and critical mind, I could not have asked for a better role model, inspirational and always incredibly patient (even towards my never-ending questions, my poor French habits and my dislike for administrative tasks). This thesis would not have been possible without him.

I would also like to show my gratitude to my Ph.D. co-supervisor, Prof. Ger Duijzings, for sharing his expert knowledge of and advice on the Balkans, and for many insightful discussions and suggestions on my field visits and my research methods.

I would like to warmly thank Dr. Jennifer Robinson and Dr. Wendy Pullan for having agreed to act as examiners for my viva and for giving me detailed and insightful feedback which greatly improved this thesis.

This thesis would not have been possible without the generous support of the École Normale Supérieure Ulm and the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Many thanks to Prof. Georges Prévélakis for his guidance and his help in obtaining funding as an early career researcher. I also would like to thank the institute Sciences-Po Paris, which offered me a position of adjunct lecturer and gave me the opportunity to design and deliver a class on the Balkans for two years.

I am grateful to the members of my M.Phil./Ph.D. upgrade panel, Prof. JoAnn McGregor, Dr. Eric Gordy, Dr. Pushpa Arabindoo and Dr. Andrew Harris, for their careful reading, valuable comments and suggestion on my upgrade thesis, with special thanks to Dr. Jason Dittmer who kindly agreed to chair this panel.

I wish to thank my undergraduate Geography teacher at Louis-le-Grand, Mme Annette Ciattoni. When I was 16, Geography was my least favourite subject, but I



had not met her yet. She passed onto me her passion for Geography and, for her, I left my first love, Philosophy. After a journey of three years with her through the geography of religions, France and Saharan countries, there was no turning back.

I own sincere and earnest thankfulness to Dr. Emmanuelle Boulineau, who directed my Sorbonne Master on Bulgaria. She has been a strong and supportive adviser to me throughout my graduate school career and without her guidance and enthusiasm, I would perhaps not have had the courage to embark on this journey. I am also indebted and thankful to Dr. Pierre Sintès, my tutor at the École Normale Supérieure, who encouraged me to conduct research in the Balkans and who warmly welcomed me among the Balkan specialists. I wish to thank also Prof. Marie Vrinat-Nikolov, my teacher of Bulgarian at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris. I was already enamoured with Slavic languages, but she further transmitted me her passion and warmly supported my application to Oxford University.

I am grateful to Prof. Judith Pallot, my tutor at Oxford University, for her help in integrating the British university system; to Prof. Keith S. Brown, for his positive feedback on my work at the ASN conference in New York; to Dr. Divna Penčić and Prof. Robert Home, for their valuable assistance in my research on post-earthquake urban planning in Skopje.

I would like to express my deep thanks to my friends in Macedonia and co-panelists in New York: Kristina, for her constant help and support during my field visits in Skopje; Misha, for the fruitful discussions we had on Skopje 2014 and urban politics, and his mother, who kindly accepted a video interview; Anastas, for sharing his experience and his views on Macedonian politics and nationalism.

My field visits were made enjoyable and fruitful thanks to all my friends in Skopje, Martina, Srdzan, Ajsel, Gago, Xhabir, Nevsija, Hava, Silke, Albert and Giorgia. I wish also to thank my close friends, Baptiste, who patiently listened to all my passionate speeches about the Balkans, and Aude, who never stopped supporting me, even in the difficult moments of the last two years.

I would like to thank my family for all their love and support. Thanks to my parents, both researchers, who failed in dissuading me from pursuing academic research but

successfully instilled in me their enthusiasm and love of scientific rigour, hard work and Slavic cultures. Thanks to my brothers, Frédéric, who kept his sense of humour when I had lost mine, and Adrien, who has very original ideas on how to put an end to conflicts in the Balkans.

Last but not least, I thank Eric, who has been by my side throughout this Ph.D., and whose love and encouragement allowed me to finish this journey.

I would like to dedicate this work to my grandmother, Madou, Righteous Among the Nations, who fought all her life to defend her ideals and left us too soon, but who passed on me her determination, her willpower and her strong sense of injustice.

## – ABSTRACT –

This thesis makes two main contributions. Based on fieldwork in Skopje, it first adds an original case study to the literature on urban divisions and draws attention to overlooked cities where processes of division may not be immediately obvious in the urban landscape, but which nonetheless exist. Second, it adds to an emerging line of research that seeks to find new ways to think about urban divisions and reflects on the use of static and dynamic concepts to describe urban processes. Instead of regarding divided cities as ontologically-given and focusing on a few cities elevated to the status of paradigmatic cases, I emphasise the processes that bring a city to division with the concept of *dividing city*. This thesis critically questions orthodox histories of Skopje as a divided city and the role of elites in fostering the image of division, from the Ottoman city to the socialist city, and post-1991 redevelopment. I explore how ideological and political dynamics and processes affect the lived experience of the city's inhabitants and, how, in turn, the latter both take part in and resist the construction and division of the city. I show that the city as a lived environment may offer other narratives than that of division, in other words, that alternatives to the divided city do exist.

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## – INTRODUCTION –

This thesis engages critically with the concept of the ‘divided city’, which has drawn the attention of a growing literature. The impact of increasing social differentiations, identity-based conflicts and the ‘rebirth’ of ethnic claims has been accompanied in cities world-wide by spatial divisions. Social scientists have used many qualifiers to refer to these divisions: cities are either ‘dual’ (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991), ‘shattered’ (Fainstain *et al.*, 1992), ‘partitioned’ (Marcuse and Van Kempen 2002), ‘fragmented’ (Burger 2002), or ‘quartered’ (Marcuse, 1993), ‘polarised’ (Bollens, 1998, 2000), ‘segregated’ (Murtagh, Graham and Shirlow, 2008) and, of course ‘divided’<sup>1</sup> (Marcuse, 1993; Low, 1996; Haumont and Lévy, 1998). Among this wide array of terms, the divided city is the most striking with its general, unconditional and absolute character.

While the concept of divided city has been increasingly popular since the 1990s, it lacks a clear definition. The term is commonly used to describe places where political changes or border shifts have led to a separation of urban space into different entities and, often, with a material border line. While the divided city can be understood as a ‘culmination form of social, economic and political segregation of cities’ (Kliot and Mansfeld, 1999:167), some researchers suggest to use the more exclusive concept of ‘ethno-nationally divided city’ (Anderson, 2008; 2010) to refer to places combining the issues of ‘state-divided’ cities and ‘ethnically-divided’ cities, i.e. where the state’s territorial sovereignty is contested, as in Belfast, Derry, Mostar, Jerusalem or Nicosia.

The aim of this thesis is not to offer another definition of the divided city or a refinement of the divided / undivided opposition, nor to discuss, among the variety of terms forged by social scientists, which is the most relevant to describe urban divisions. Rather, this thesis is part of a broader discussion within the literature on urban divisions on the divided city concept itself and on the use of static and dynamic concepts to describe urban processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Although I critically approach the term of ‘divided city’, I choose not put it between inverted commas in the rest of my thesis for the sake of clarity.

Although the divided city literature includes many different and valuable contributions, approaches and methodologies, it is only recently that the concept of divided city has started to be questioned. Allegra *et al.* (2012) pave the way for this reflection, arguing that researchers have focused on paradigmatic examples and abstract categories based on single-factor explanations, rather than undertaking a case-by-case approach which recognises the diversity of the causes of urban divisions. By defining categories of cities and ranking them based on these supposedly inherent and shared characteristics, they argue that the literature tends to frame research fields in terms of taxonomies and hierarchies. This may result in an essentialisation of explanatory factors of urban conflict and fragmentation, among which ethnic, religious or national belonging. As developed by the authors (2012:563), ‘collective identities and ethnicity can be fruitfully analyzed in terms of scenarios of urban inter-group relations and policy interventions [...], but the reification of these identities – as well as of the historical background of urban conflicts – invariably moves the focus from urban dynamics toward a Huntingtonian analysis of “civilizational”, “historical”, “ethnonational” and “religious” fault lines’. More recently, Brand and Fregonese (2013) warned against the same risk towards an essentialisation of urban processes. Identifying a lack of studies on the early and late stages of division – i.e. developing *polarisation* and attempts of *de-polarisation* – they recommend analysing the *processes* through which social relations may worsen or improve in cities usually tagged as ‘divided’, such as Beirut and Belfast, rather than the *state* of polarisation ‘as a given, “black-boxed” condition of a city’ (Brand and Fregonese, 2013:2).

In my thesis, based on fieldwork in Skopje, I similarly emphasise the process whereby divisions are made or reinforced rather than the condition of division. In Skopje, divisions are not marked by artificial walls and the label of divided city is both employed and resisted by its inhabitants and urban elites. Therefore, Skopje’s ambiguous status makes it an empirically interesting and conceptually suggestive case in the study of urban divisions. Not only does my analysis shed light on a relatively neglected city, it also draws attention to overlooked cities where processes of division may not immediately obvious in the urban landscape, but which exist nonetheless. Throughout my analysis, I opt for a vectorial categorisation, focusing on the *direction* taken by urban space (dividing/undividing): in other words, I argue that the city cannot be defined as it *is*, but as it *becomes*. This is why I suggest the inclusive and processual



concept of the *dividing city*. My thesis therefore adds an original case study and adds to an emerging line of research that seeks to find new ways to think about urban divisions.

I analyse the question of hegemony within and across territorial and communal divisions. Specifically, I focus on the manner in which elite visions and strategies for the city are formed and then may be adopted and reproduced or, on the contrary, rejected and opposed by urban inhabitants. They may greatly influence the way the city is lived and felt by its inhabitants. In Lefebvre's (1974) conceptual triad of *representations of space*, *representational spaces* and *spatial practices*<sup>2</sup>, *representations of space* refers to this space as conceived by the elites, whose designs and norms shape and order space. Lefebvre suggests that this abstract space may be opposed by the *spatial practices* of urban inhabitants and, in particular, their *representational spaces*, i.e. spaces which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. In my thesis, I am concerned to explore the extent to which an alternative city, which contradicts the representations forged by urban elites from above, might be possible. I explore how ideological and political dynamics and processes affect the lived experience of the city's inhabitants and, how, in turn, the latter both take part in and resist the construction and division of the city. The thesis therefore critically questions orthodox histories of Skopje as a divided city and the role of elite decisions in constructing, perpetuating and exploiting the image of division. I will show that the city may offer other possibilities than that of division.

Theoretically, the thesis contributes to bridging different theoretical fields in order to explore relationships between power, place-making, identity-building and urban space. Being part of a broader conceptual reflection on divided cities, it seeks to analyse the dialectic relations between space and society at a range of scales.

I first bring together two areas of research that have often been considered as separate fields – the literature on divided cities and critical urbanism. Part of this work relies on untranslated French literature (Ababsa, 2002; Agier, 1999; Benafla, 2002; Brunet, 1967; Dorier-Apprill *et al.*, 2007; Brun, 1994; Brun and Rhein, 1994; Chapelon, 2008; Fourcault, 1996; Gay, 1995; Grasland, 1998; Haumont, 1996; Haumont and Lévy, 1998; Le Goff, 2006; Madoré, 2004; Navez-Bouchanine, 2002; Rémy, 2002; Reitel *et al.*, 2002; Rhein and Elissade, 2004; Seys, 2002; Vidal Rojas, 2002; Wacquant,

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<sup>2</sup> Or *conceived space*, *lived space* and *perceived space*.

2005 and 2012), whose analyses on urban segregation and fragmentation provide a different, qualitative and theoretical, perspective, which seems particularly relevant to this thesis and useful to English academic discourse. This enables me to develop a dynamic and processual idea of potentially divided or *dividing* cities. Whereas much literature has addressed cities considered as *already* divided, i.e. cities where the division is spatially *visible*, often materialised by a wall or a barrier (Anderson, 2008; Bollens, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2006, 2011; Calame and Charlesworth, 2012; Fainstain and al., 1992; Fourcault, 1996; Haumont and Lévy, 1998; Kelly and Mitchell, 1992; Klein, 2005; Kliot and Mansfeld, 1999; Low, 1996; Marcuse, 1993; Murtagh and al., 2008; Nagle, 2009a and 2009b), the value of my case study is that Skopje allows an analysis of processes that may bring a city to division. In particular, I show that Skopje is a city constantly undergoing dynamic processes through which divisions are realised and reinforced at a range of scales. While I occasionally identify examples of divided urban space, I do not reify these as necessarily being indicative of a divided city, but outcomes of dividing processes that may shift over time and space.

Second, I draw on critical urban theory in order to problematise the relations between power and divisions in urban space and conceptualise alternative practices. More precisely, I draw particularly on the perspectives offered by Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau to explore processes of urban division and suggest some new ways of thinking about cities as *dividing* rather than 'divided'. A few authors have used their works in the context of 'divided cities', but only in short articles based on case-studies, and never as part of a conceptual examination of the divided city. McCann's (1999) discussion of race, protests and public space through a Lefebvrian prism addresses the racialized geographies of US cities, but not the specific case of divided cities. Nagle (2009b) applies Lefebvre's ideas on participatory democracy and spatial politics to the context of a divided city, Belfast, but his analysis focuses on extraordinary and collective events where alternatives to ethno-national cleavages are displayed, such as carnivals. He does not reflect on individual tactics, as do Kelly and Mitchell (2010), by applying de Certeau's concept of 'walk' to Belfast. While interesting, no further theoretical reflection is drawn from this study and, again, they accept the idea of the divided city rather than seeing Belfast as 'dividing'. Yacobi (2007; 2009) uses the works of Foucault, Lefebvre and de Certeau in the case of the Israeli city of Lod, analysed as a 'mixed town'. While valuable, his work is still based on a positional, although rather unclear, differentiation between 'divided' and 'mixed'

cities. Examining the way planning is used by Israel's ethno-national regime to 'judeise' and 'de-arabise' urban space and thus build an 'ethnocracy', he shows that this hegemonic attempt is challenged by an everyday resistance. Yet, his work focuses only on the Palestinian and Arab resistance to the 'Jewish city' and does not examine the possibility of alternatives to ethno-national cleavages.

I bring together Foucault, Lefebvre and de Certeau's perspectives to examine issues of power, resistance, and transgression in dividing cities.<sup>3</sup> Using elements of their thought helps me illuminate aspects of the dividing city. I draw on Foucault's work on power and control, in particular urban planning and architecture, to conceptualise power structures and strategies of control in dividing cities. Lefebvre's conceptual triad (*perceived space/representations of space/representational spaces*) offers ways to analyse issues of resistance to dominant power by alternative groups in urban space. Finally, I draw on De Certeau's ideas of tactics and transgressions to examine individual responses to power. I use their combined perspectives to understand the relationships between top-down management and the lived space of urban inhabitants, a schema which has a broad relevance in the case of Skopje where urban change is strongly driven by elites. Moreover, the perspectives offered by these three authors have so far only been applied to cities commonly recognised as divided (such as Belfast) or to 'mixed cities'. Yet, they can be useful to understand the dynamics of *dividing* cities, by highlighting a range of factors that take part in processes of divisions, focusing on relations of power and analysing the various and opposing strategies at work in such spaces. Skopje may be my case-study, but I suggest that this approach may be more generally relevant to divided or dividing cities. My approach leads to a new perspective on the way space can be constructed by divisive ethno-national projects that lead to segregation and the corrosion of urbanity – or *citadinité* (Lefebvre, 1996). It also enables a consideration of the possibility of resistance or alternatives and the way *spaces of representation* may be countered by the *representational spaces* of urban inhabitants and marginal outgroups.

Empirically, my study constitutes an original contribution in its use of previously unused sources (secondary sources that have scarcely been exploited outside Macedonia and, mostly, primary sources that have not been translated). Most

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<sup>3</sup> I also supplement their work with ideas from a range of other urban, political and spatial theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Guy Debord, Gilles Deleuze, Tim Cresswell, Don Mitchell and David Sibley.

importantly, it provides a case-study of a relatively neglected city in a rather well-studied region. Compared with other 'sensitive' localities in South-Eastern Europe, Macedonia has been investigated in less detail than war-torn places, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina or Kosovo. Despite its status as a capital city, Skopje itself has seldom been studied by Western and Balkan scholars. Many existing works, such as Mazower's (2005) brilliant study of Salonica, are historical analyses of pre-World War II processes and monographs that do not reflect on the concept of divided city in general. Urban geographic, historic and ethnographic research (Bollens, 2011; Calame and Pasic, 2009; Donia, 2006) has mostly focused on former multiethnic cities that have experienced violent processes of ethnic cleansing (such as Mostar or Sarajevo).

The scarcity of available literature shows how little Skopje and the issue of its urban divisions have been studied so far. While the reconstruction of the city following a major earthquake in 1963 aroused worldwide media and political attention, very few scholars have analysed the pre- and post-earthquake situation, which leaves us with a small base of studies. Two books address the issue of urban divisions in Skopje: one written by a Macedonian sociologist and the other by two architects, one Macedonian and one Austrian. *Skopje, between the Vision and the Reality*<sup>4</sup>, written by Aceski in 1996, was only published in Macedonian. While this book provides a valuable critical analysis of post-1963 urban reconstruction and its relation with the 'slumisation' of the city in the following decades, and although it is written by a professor of sociology at Skopje's main university, it does not meet academic standards, because of its lack of references and precise data to support its assertions. *Skopje – The World's Bastard. Architecture of the Divided City*<sup>5</sup> was published both in Macedonian and English in 2011. It examines the spatial, social and symbolic transformations experienced by the city since World War II, with an emphasis on the last decade, and, in particular, the recent urban reconstruction of the city centre. This beautifully illustrated study offers a valuable narrative of the post-earthquake reconstruction, a harsh critique of the latest urban planning policy, and an examination of power relations in Skopje through an architectural lens. Yet, it is not an academic publication. It is unreferenced and it more often asserts than analyses. Apart from these books, a small number of Western scholars have addressed the issue of post-1963 urban policies in Skopje in journal or book articles (Brown, 2001; Home, 2003; Lafazanovski, 2006). The Macedonian literature on

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<sup>4</sup> *Skopje, Visija i Realnost.*

<sup>5</sup> *Skopje, Svetskoto Kopile. Arxitekturata na podeleniot grad.*

Skopje is often historical and descriptive, with very little analysis (Arsovski, 1971; Dojchinovski, 1997; Kačeva and al., 2006 ; Stamenov and Čolović, 2003), with the exception of Popovikj's (2010) MSc essay on the ongoing reconstruction of the city centre, Vangeli's (2011) contribution on urban social movements and Marina and Penčić's short article (2010) on urban transformations from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1948, which offers an interesting study of Skopje's urban structure and morphology, yet with no demographic analysis.<sup>6</sup>

Ethnic homogenisation may be less blatant in Skopje than in Mostar or Sarajevo, but the city is nonetheless undergoing similar processes. The 2001 conflict, in which the Albanian militant group NLA<sup>7</sup> were opposed to the Macedonian security forces may have stopped at the city's periphery, but it nonetheless impacted the life of Skopjani (the Macedonian term of residents of the city). The Ohrid Framework Agreement<sup>8</sup>, which put an end to the conflict and answered some Albanian claims, has given the international community the misleading impression that the issue of interethnic relations was solved. However, increasing separation and tension between communities suggest the opposite, demonstrating that the methods and approaches used to cope with societal divisions have failed to be effective.

Focusing on a *dividing city* such as Skopje offers insight into the mechanisms that lead to such divisions and may be suggestive for efforts to prevent them. My analysis draws attention to overlooked cities, where processes of division may not be as visible as a wall running through the city, but nonetheless exist. Because it shows potentially 'dividing' processes before the city becomes 'divided', it provides insights on the dynamics of spatial politics in urban environments. Rather than attempting to find *a posteriori* solutions to manage divided cities, it sheds light on logics that potentially lead to such outcomes and may be used to inform action to avoid them.

### *Skopje: an overview*

Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, is a divided city. In the newly independent state the Macedonians (70 percent) and Albanians (21 percent), which earlier had been bound together by the Yugoslav 'ethnic glue', rediscovered their

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<sup>6</sup> Penčić's PhD in Architecture on the same topic was defended in 2011 but has unfortunately not been published yet and I could not access the manuscript.

<sup>7</sup> Albanian National Liberation Army

<sup>8</sup> Hereafter referred to as 'OFA'.

distinctiveness. They are divided into two different worlds by language, alphabet, religion, values, political representation as well as systems of information and organisation. Ethnic Macedonians, who are mostly Orthodox Christians, speak Macedonian, a Slavic language ... The majority of Ethnic Albanians are Muslims and speak Albanian ... Maybe the most crucial, but certainly the most visible division is their segregation in (urban) space. The river Vardar stretches as a natural and historical division line from one end of the city to the other. (Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011:58)

This excerpt from *Skopje – The World's Bastard. Architecture of the Divided city*, is striking. More caution would have been expected from a book quite critical of the recent urban reconstruction of the city centre, the Skopje 2014 project, which aims at reconstructing the city along ethno-nationalist lines. However, as suggested by the title, the book's thesis is clear: the Macedonian capital is a divided city which is, now maybe more than ever, victim of conflictual urban policies which turn its multicultural population into a highly segregated society. While the authors are the first to recognise the role of political elites in this scenario for Skopje, never once do they question the very idea of Skopje as a divided city or the impact of this image on both the perceptions and the everyday life of its inhabitants. This shows that even critical analysts are not capable of seeing the city as anything other than divided. I will now show why this image is so deeply entrenched.

Skopje, is one of the last remaining multicultural cities in South-Eastern Europe, the capital of Republic of Macedonia<sup>9</sup>, the only multiethnic former Yugoslav country that has not followed through the nation-state logic of most of its neighbours by resorting to 'ethnic cleansing'. To some extent, Skopje is a rare case that has preserved its Ottoman characteristic of ethnic diversity and cultural mixing, in a region where the process of nation building has *de facto* led to a simplification of the ethnic composition of urban spaces, and in particular capital cities – as the prime showcases of the political choices of the new nation-states.

Skopje makes up a quarter of Macedonia's population of two million. Following the official ethnic identification, the composition of its population closely parallels the national one, with more than 66 percent Macedonians, 20 percent Albanians, 5 percent

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<sup>9</sup> Although the country is still referred to within the UN under the provisional reference of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), I will use the name 'Macedonia' for the sake of clarity. I will also refer to Macedonians who consider themselves ethno-Macedonians as 'Macedonians' and those who consider themselves as ethno-Albanian as 'Albanians'.

Roma and almost 9 percent of other ethnic groups.<sup>10</sup> A majority of the population identifies itself as Christian, with 65 percent Orthodox, and 33 percent Muslim – most of whom are Albanian, Turkish or Roma<sup>11</sup>. Skopje's different groups are unevenly distributed within urban space (*figure 1*). While there are mixed areas – particularly in the western and eastern parts of the city – a rough snapshot of the city shows an ethnically partitioned landscape (*figure 2*). The Vardar river seems to serve as a boundary of a south-north division between the Macedonian, Albanian and Roma communities. While a majority of Macedonians are settled in the southern part – largely rebuilt after a major earthquake that took place in 1963 and characterised by its communist architecture – the northern part is predominantly populated by Albanians and Roma (*figure 3 and 4*).

Here again, the distribution is not smooth. The old part of the city is mostly populated by Albanians, who are also a majority in Čair Municipality. With its numerous mosques, its Ottoman architecture and its preserved Čaršija (which avoided the post-1963 reconstruction), the area is usually represented in a very Orientalising way in ethnic Macedonian narratives. Its spatial structure, in particular, with its narrow and curved streets, is viewed as a 'maze' where it would be dangerous to get lost. Finally, Roma populations are concentrated in Topansko Pole – or 'Topaana', part of Čair – and, most of all, in the upper-northern part of Skopje, Šuto Orizari, commonly referred to as 'Šutka', the only municipality in the country where Roma make up a majority of the population – almost 78 percent – and numerically the largest Roma area in all eastern Europe, with 22 017 inhabitants<sup>12</sup> in 2002. The community concentration in this neighbourhood – left aside in the post-earthquake planning and, in some areas, very similar to a shantytown – played an active part in its perception as a 'ghetto'. But contrary to what is commonly assumed by Macedonian politicians, local media and many international experts, Šutka is not a socially homogeneous place. 'Flashy' houses disrupt the monotony of tinned and single-room houses, and the most 'wealthy' area of the municipality bears the name of 'Beverly Hills'. However, unemployment and poverty are the rule rather than the exception, and while some families live in more

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<sup>10</sup> In 2002, a little bit less than 65% of the population declared itself Macedonian, 25% Albanian, 3.9 % Turk, 2.7% Roma, 1.8% Serb, 0.5% Vlach and 2% of other ethnic backgrounds. In Skopje, the composition is the following one: Macedonians 75%, Albanians 20.49%, Roma 4.63%, Serbs 2.82%, Turks 1.7%, Bosniaks 1.5%, Vlachs 0.5%, and others 1.61% (*source*: 2002 census).

<sup>11</sup> 64.7% of the population belongs to the Macedonian branch of Eastern Orthodoxy, 33.3% is Muslim. There are between 55,000 and 80,000 Macedonian Muslims (*source*: 2002 census).

<sup>12</sup> *Source*: Census 2002

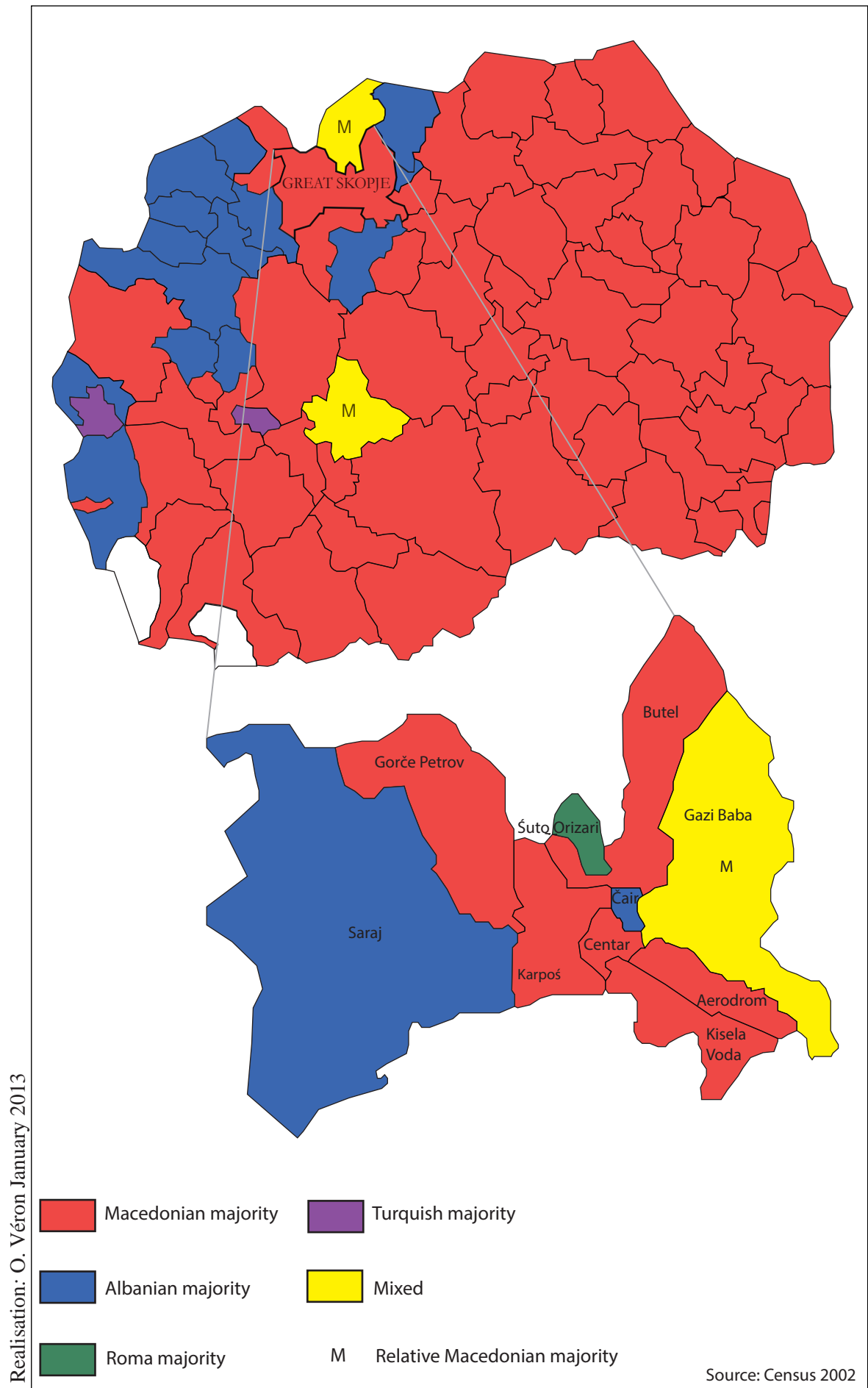
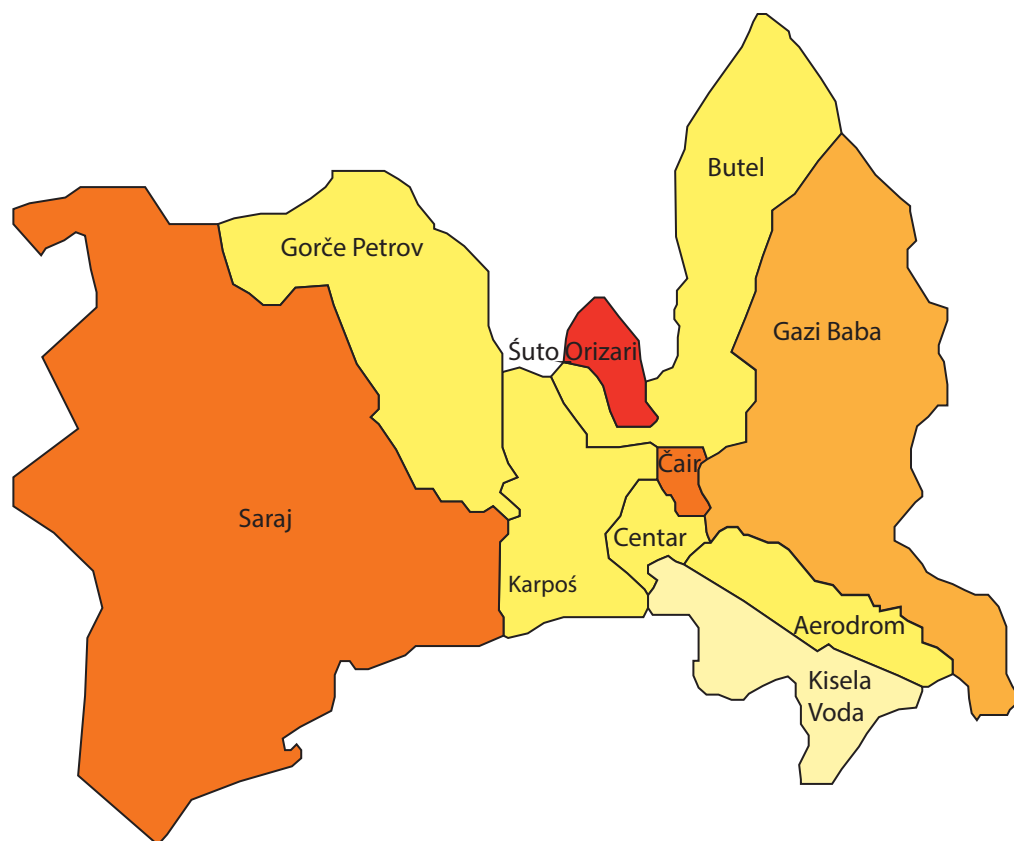
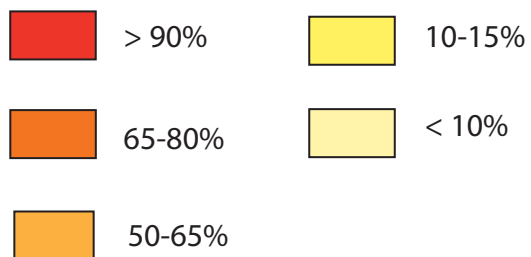


Figure 1: Regional and local repartition of ethnic groups in Macedonia



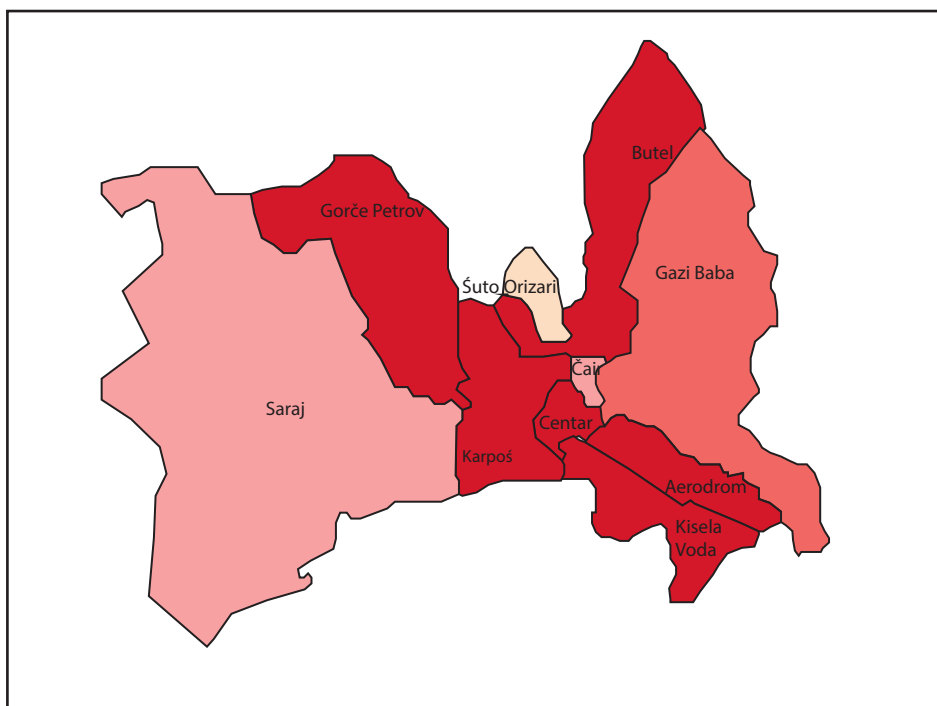


% of ethnic minorities per Municipality:

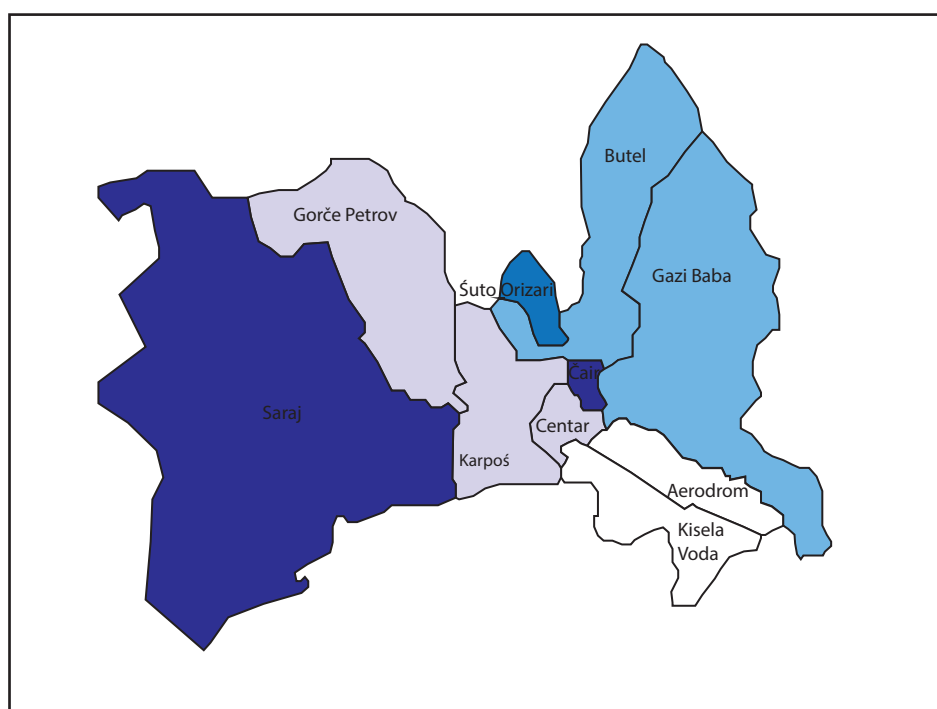


Source: Census 2002

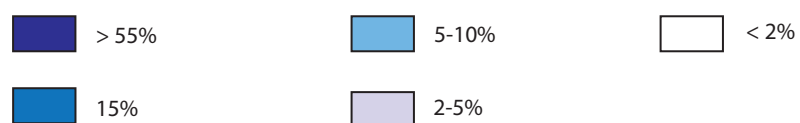
Figure 2: Total concentration of ethnic minorities per Municipality in Skopje



a: Concentration of Macedonians per Municipality:

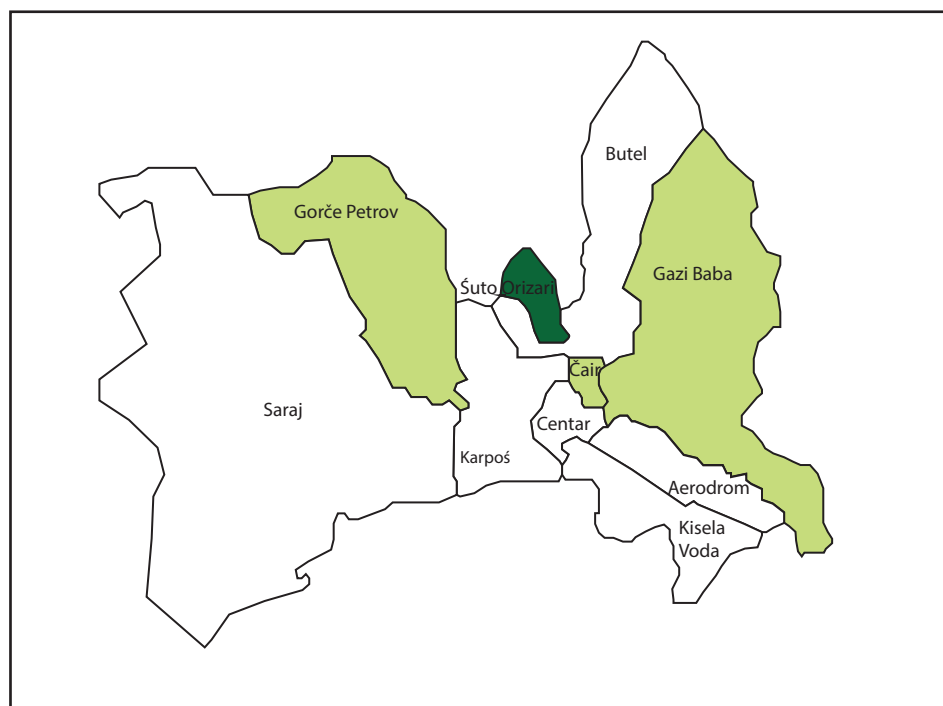


b: Concentration of Albanians per Municipality:

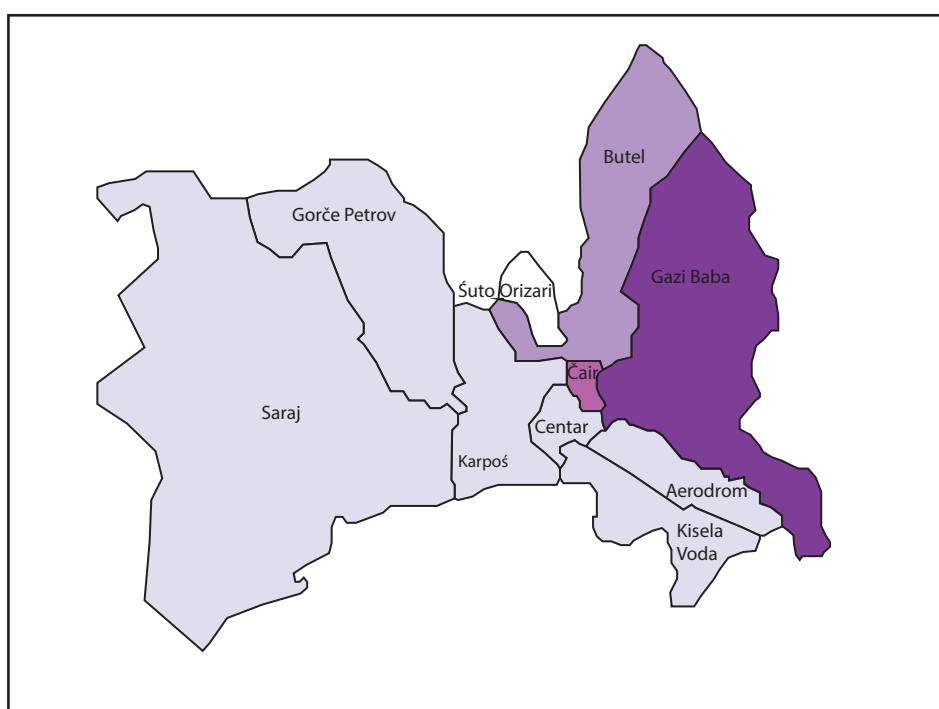


Source: Census 2002

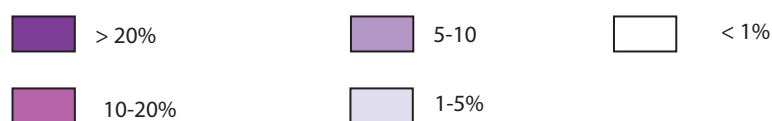
Figure 3: Concentrations of Macedonian and Albanian populations in Skopje



a: Concentration of Romas per Municipality:



b: Concentration of other ethnic groups (Serbs, Turks, Bosniaks) per Municipality:



Source: Census 2002

Figure 4 : Concentrations of Roma and other ethnic minorities in Skopje

comfortable houses, there is often insufficient money to finish the painting and the walls (*figure 5*).

The different ethno-religious groups in Macedonia show very different demographic trends. While the transition was followed by a decrease in population growth – a typical feature of former socialist countries – this process has engulfed the Macedonian community to a greater extent than the other groups, such as the Roma and the Albanians, who have high birth rates and a younger population. Successive waves of migration from Kosovo have also played an important part here: first in the 1960s and 70s, and, more recently, Kosovo war refugees, mainly identified as Roma and Albanians. This explains why the proportion of Albanians in Skopje went from 2.6 percent in 1953 to 20.49 percent in 2002<sup>13</sup>. This demographic ‘threat’<sup>14</sup> is used by Macedonian nationalists to foster tensions between the Macedonian majority and the other ethnic groups, especially the Albanians, referred to as a uniform group. Such approaches rely on ‘scare tactics’, e.g. showing maps of ‘Great Albania’ or depicting Albanians as threatening invaders. In addition, demographic, economic and social data seem to overlap with data on ethnic groups, with a majority of marginalised populations belonging to minority groups. In Skopje, the spatial distribution of ethnic communities coincides with unemployment and poverty rates<sup>15</sup> – something quite telling of the place attached to ethnic status. Dwelling floor space per person, a proxy for socio-economic status, testifies of this distribution in urban space (*figure 6*).

### *Historical and regional contexts*

Over the course of the last two centuries, the Balkan region has experienced a re-organization of space and populations under processes of nation-building, which divided the multicultural and reticular imperial area into several political entities defining themselves as nation-states. National identities, as political constructions, have

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<sup>13</sup> In 1953, 61.1% of Skopje’s total inhabitants were ethnic Macedonians, and only 2.6% were Albanians – numerically, the 4<sup>th</sup> minority after the Turks (18.5%), the Gypsies (6.4%) and the Serbs (7.1%) (*source: stat.gov.mk*)

<sup>14</sup> Comparing censuses is telling of the on-going demographic trends. The Albanian population part has swelled from 8% after WWII to 25% in the 1990s. In 1994, Macedonians had a total fertility rate of 2.07, while the fertility rates of other ethnic groups were: Albanian - 4.10, Turkish - 3.55, Roma - 4.01, Serb 2.07, Vlachs - 1.88 and Others - 3.05. Analysing the fertility rates of religious group shows the same results: Christian - 2.17, with 2.20 for Catholics and 2.06 for Orthodox, Islam - 4.02 and others - 2.16 (*source: stat.gov.mk*).

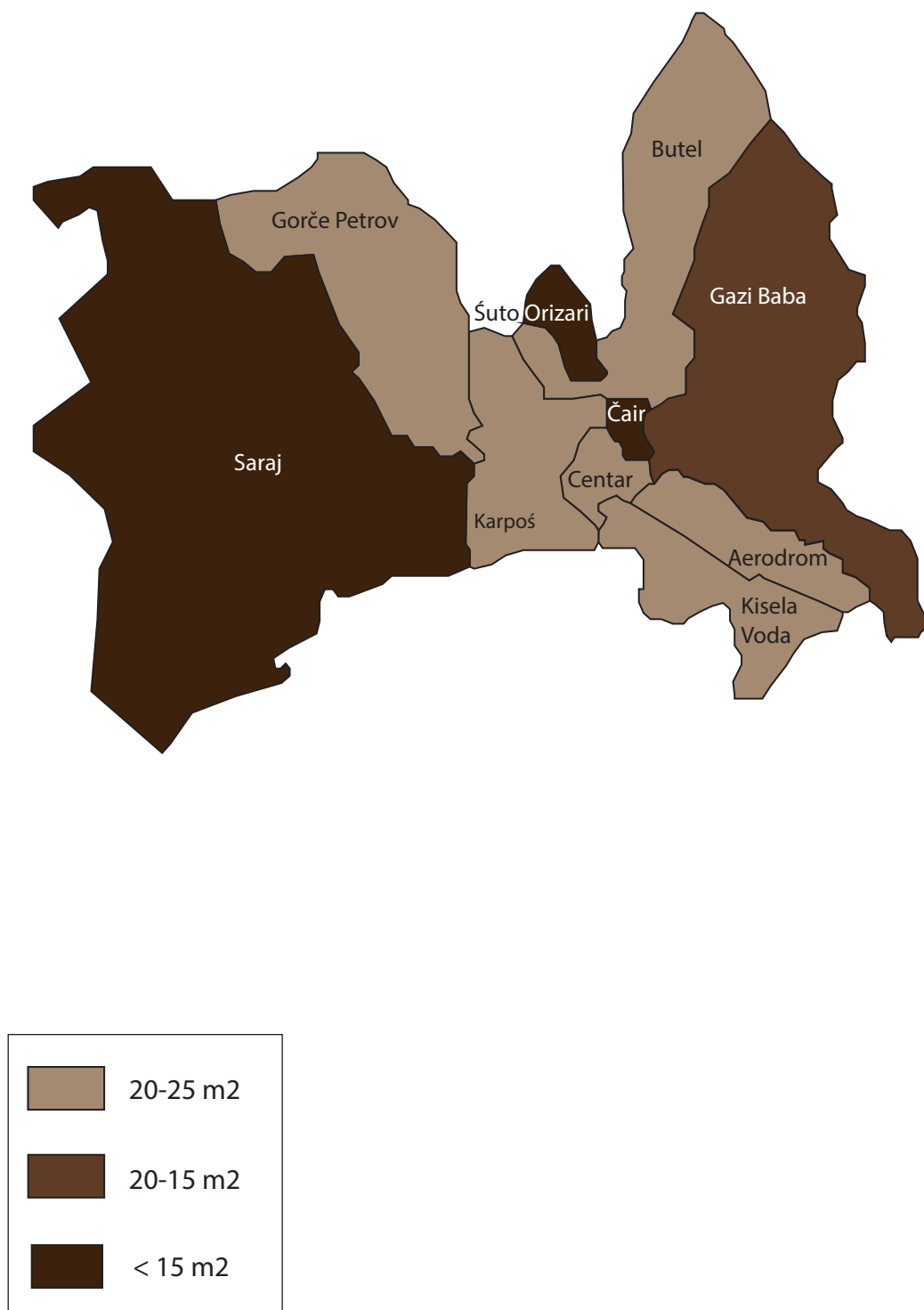
<sup>15</sup> The unemployment rate for the economically active population is of 17% for Skopje, but reaches more than 46% in Čair and almost 63% in Šutka (*source: Census 2002*).



Realisation: O. Véron January 2013

Photo: O. Véron

Figure 5 : The different faces of Šutka



Source: Census 2002

Figure 6 : Average floor surface by member of the household per Municipality

been conceived in the region upon ethnic grounds. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism was a tool for newly independent states to establish ethnically homogeneous territories – a very difficult task, given the high intermixing of populations (Cole, 1981; Kitromilides, 1989; Prevelakis, 1999 and 2000). Despite the prevailing idea of ‘brotherhood and unity’, Socialist Yugoslavia (the only non-national federal state in the Balkans) also played a major role in the institutionalisation of ethnic identities and relations. Its federalism was founded on ethno-national sovereignty principles which bore the seeds of future ethnocracies once the socialist framework was removed.

Macedonia has never been a homogeneously populated place, and has, like most of its Balkan neighbours, been characterised by the recent development of state sovereignty and ethno-genesis, but this has not proceeded at the same pace as its neighbours. Compared with its neighbours, Macedonia is a ‘latecomer’ in the process of nation- and state-building. In a region where national and state identities are based on ethnic principles and where other nations can claim their historical primacy, the country suffers from its particular latecomer position (Véron, 2008).

First, its location as a regional crossroads laid it open to competing spheres of influence and to rivalries between more powerful neighbours, which delayed the development of its national identity and iconography. While the idea of a Macedonian nation emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was only given statehood in socialist Yugoslavia, with the ‘ethnic’ Macedonians established as a constituent nation with the right to their own republic. With the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the newly independent state faced the contestation of its sovereignty by some of its neighbours, including Bulgaria and Greece: the former recognised the Macedonian *state* but refused to recognise the Macedonian *nation*, and the latter admitted the Macedonian *nation* but opposed the Macedonian *state*. As a result, Macedonian leaders and populations reacted strongly to this lack of recognition of both its state sovereignty and national iconography, by claiming its right to both through ethnic nationalism.

Second, the constant divisions of the region and forced population processes have produced a great cultural diversity. ‘Ethnic’ Macedonians have to share a territory they consider ‘theirs’ with other communities. ‘Threatened’ in its existence, Macedonian nationalism has fed on adversity and spread within the state. Civic identity is weakly embedded in the institutional framework, with the emphasis on an ‘ethnic’

understanding of the nation, endowing Macedonians with exclusive rights to the state. In turn, these nationalist policies have sparked off reactions by minority communities who have considered their rights to be violated. Consequently, tensions within the Republic have risen both in magnitude and frequency, eventually resulting in increasing separation between the various communities at the urban level. Such processes have been theorised by Brubaker (1996) in his analysis of the politics of 'nationalising states' (that is, states conceived by their elites as 'incomplete' or 'unrealised' nation-states).

In 2001, the brief conflict between Albanian fighters and Macedonian security forces revealed how rampant the ethnic tensions were in the country (Brow *et al.*, 2002). Although the internationally-led agreement put a stop to potential civil war, the new institutional arrangement it proposed did not solve the issue of interethnic relations. A new consociational model settled some problems in the short term, but at the price of the politicization and institutionalization of ethnic differences (Daskalovski, 2002; Vankovska, 2006; Reka, 2008). As a result, Macedonia appears more than ever to be a fragmented society, with increasingly homogeneous, closed and separate communities.

### *Skopje: a dividing city?*

Several trends have characterised the post-socialist period in Skopje, among which are the growth of interethnic tensions, privatisation and urban divisions. Intercommunity tensions did not appear only at the beginning of the 1990s with the end of the socialist 'glue'. The 1980s were marked by the deterioration of interethnic relations in Skopje – a trend reflected in the processes of distribution of ethnic groups in urban space. Because of the unstable situation in the whole region, Skopje was subject to processes of immigration in the 1990s, a growth which led to new processes of urban distribution (Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011). The rapid inflow of migrants which the city could not immediately accommodate led to the formations of slums and spontaneous segregation. Due to restrictions of space, densification led to the formation of totally unplanned housing areas in the northern part of Skopje – a space left 'untouched' by Skopje planners. With the 'Albanianisation' of the northern areas of Skopje, neighbourhoods such as Dizhonska in Čair slowly turned into ethnically exclusive and closed areas. This trend towards ethnic homogenisation – whether real or perceived – had a snowball effect since many Macedonians chose to move to 'safer' neighbourhoods on the right side of the river. The 'Turkish' Čaršija did not avoid this process of ethnicisation.



Initially a multiethnic space, it came to be considered ‘Albanian’ with the departure of many Macedonian merchants in the 1990s and the increasing hegemony of Albanian as ‘the’ Čaršija’s language. In only a few years, processes of division altered the image of the city and the perceptions associated with its various spaces.

In parallel with the escalation of tensions between the two main ethnic groups, Skopje was also profoundly reshaped by the privatisation process – one of the main priorities of the newly independent state (Tsenkova, 2009). As in many post-socialist cities (Andrusz *et al.*, 1996), this privatisation process left visible traces in the urban landscape: many formerly public spaces were ‘privatised’ or, neglected, they rapidly deteriorated, such as happened with the communal areas of socialist blocks. New pressures led to the rapid closure of space and the withdrawal of people into the restricted circle of the family or the house. In southern middle-upper class areas, such as Taftalidzhe or Debar Maalo, one-floor buildings were turned into individual houses surrounded by fences. Such territorial practices may be seen as one of the first steps towards processes of urban division. On the other bank, poor neighbourhoods left to the forces of the market were rapidly ‘conquered’ by commercial space. Topaana, a major ‘Roma slum’ existing since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, was rapidly surrounded by commercial areas which ‘cut’ it from the rest of the city and seemingly forced its inhabitants to close themselves off from the outside and live secluded (Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011). In the absence of real programmes of state social housing, the housing market prices intensified this segregation of space. Lefebvre’s insights on the role of capital in the construction of urban divisions can be useful to understand the processes at work in Skopje since the end of socialism. His perspective, also followed by Mitchell (2003), shows how the power of the state and capital frames and restructures urban space, evicting those who do not fit with its ideal representation.

Both ethnic nationalism and privatisation resulted in identities being expressed openly and being differentiated in a more pronounced manner. Individual expressions of identity, which tended to be confined to the private sphere before the 1980s, took a much stronger public dimension after independence. Banal details, such as the alphabet used on façades or the colours of houses, increasingly became indicators of ethnic and religious identity (Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011). Exacerbated by the social and economic crisis, these details became major signifiers of identity, and directly reshaped urban space. Publicly marking a house, street or neighbourhood with the markers of ethnicity or religion, is a way for individuals or groups to challenge the city in its unity.

The exclusionary appropriation of space by the use of identity markers which do not bear any references to the multi-ethnic social fabric is one important process that tends towards urban division, which the thesis explores.

With the 2001 hostilities, a poisonous atmosphere – which both preceded and accompanied the signature of the OFA – led to increasing trends towards more enclosed communities in Skopje. Fear of nationalist claims and retaliation resulted in decreasing intermixing and increased tendencies towards urban partitioning and micro-local homogenisation, a process characterised by a division of urban space in identifiable and homogeneously populated spatial areas, but often heterogeneous at an overall urban scale. Such tendencies can be seen as an indication of a larger process whereby Skopje was dividing, without necessarily giving rise to a ‘divided city’.

However, urban divisions were given official recognition in 2005. After years of stagnation in urban planning, a new law on state decentralisation effected a new administrative ordering of the city. Decision-making powers were transferred from the central government to the municipalities, and the territory of the Great Skopje was reordered into ten municipalities. This new organisation of the city reflected the compromise made between Macedonians and Albanians at the OFA. Because neighbouring communes, mainly populated by Albanians, were added to the city, the Albanian community went from 15.3 percent to 20.67 percent of the total population<sup>16</sup>, enabling Skopje officially to become a bilingual territory. With the reordering of the municipalities of Čair and Centre, more powers were given to local communities, but this also meant, judging from the municipalities’ new borders, that formal recognition was given to ethnic segregation in the city centre’s core, as well as in the city as a whole. Šuto Orizari – a suburban neighbourhood mostly populated by Roma populations – also accessed the status of a municipality, with a Roma mayor at its head. Being represented by ethnic political parties, from municipal to central level, Macedonians, Albanians and Roma seem, more than ever, to be divided into separate blocs, each being united around a common and exclusive identity. In the thesis, I will analyse the relationship between this new organisation and the city as a lived environment, that is to say, how top-down urban governance may contribute to processes of urban divisions.

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<sup>16</sup> *Source:* Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011.

Although decentralisation is usually brandished by the government as being a major opportunity for the empowerment of ethnic minorities, it may be seen as a source of disparities. The decentralisation law has provided the Albanian and Roma minorities with the right to their own local governments, but this measure was a double-edge sword since Skopje's municipalities do not all have the same financial resources and state support. They may be equal legally, but not financially. Moreover, communitarianism has been intensified by this unequal treatment. While no concrete walls separate communities in the Macedonian capital, Skopje is home to spatial, ethnic, religious, cultural, social, financial and political processes of division. More than ever, it appears to be a *dividing city*.

### *Research claims*

Because it is torn by severe processes of societal divisions that polarise its populations along cultural, ethnic and social lines, and that shape its space along assigned territories, Skopje might seem to be a prime example of a divided city.

Yet, my main hypothesis is that Skopje should not be regarded as a 'divided' but *dividing* city. While Skopje may not be crossed by a wall, it is nonetheless undergoing processes of division of its space and populations at various levels. My thesis seeks to examine the relationships and tensions between elite governance and the everyday life and perceptions of its inhabitants. I will analyse the role of several kinds of actors in these processes. I will show that Skopje is shaped more 'from above' than 'from below'. Processes of division do not result from spontaneous movements of populations, but from a construction guided by political and ideological considerations. Foucault's perspective on the power effects of planning and architecture will be useful to understand these processes. As Macedonia itself is led by a rationale of political and social ethnicisation, along with the promotion of differentiation between communities, Skopje is shaped by an ethno-nationalist logic of competition for power. Furthermore, strategies of inclusion and exclusion decided at an upper level tend to deprive marginalised populations of what Lefebvre refers to 'the right to the city' as well as to participation in the state. In Lefebvrian terms, the city is a place of competing strategies between rival elite groups each of which tries to assert their own representations of space and society – a rivalry which resorts to architecture and planning as a tool to affirm each group's hegemony.

Although hegemonic powers play a determinant role in shaping representations, perceptions and practices at an individual and collective level, however, they are not the only factor at stake. The perspectives offered by Foucault, Lefebvre and de Certeau help us understand that the city may be saturated by power but that this power is always in motion: far from being effective all the time, it is contestable in multiple ways. Urban representations, perceptions and practices are the result of a complex interplay of factors experienced at various scales, which I will analyse in this thesis. Being *inhabited*, the city is home to different experiences and narratives, as well as modes of relation and interaction. It is also a place where different identities are shaped and evolve. Ideological and political considerations affect the lived experience of the city's inhabitants, but, as argued by de Certeau, wider processes are not directly translated into the daily life of these individuals. As a lived environment, the city reproduces and deepens, but also contradicts narratives imposed from above. As a place of interaction, urban space is, according to Lefebvre, a place where counter-narratives and alternative identities may emerge. These identities and narratives depend on the situational context as much as on individual processes, as de Certeau particularly argued. Because they challenge the narratives decided from above, I will analyse them in detail and show that they are a suggestive – and possibly powerful – force against the scenario of the divided city.

### *Plan of the thesis*

My analysis and arguments are grouped into seven main chapters.

In the first chapter, I define and analyse the concept of divided city. I bring together the literature on divided cities with critical urban theory. I question the theoretical assumptions, analyse the practical mechanisms and discuss the methodological implications of the concept, by critically reviewing studies that analyse division in urban space. I focus in particular on the notion of 'ethno-nationally divided city', which seems to be most appropriate to the case of Skopje, before distinguishing the different terms coined by social scientists to refer to such processes (segregation, polarisation, fragmentation). I then analyse the processes at work in urban divisions, and the way urban spaces are managed by political elites. In the second section, I approach urban divisions through theories of spatial politics, in particular the perspectives offered by Foucault and Lefebvre. I show how these analyses offer insights into the relationships

between space, power and society in ‘divided cities’ and, in particular, on the way urban space may be constructed and used by different groups as a means to assert their power. Based on these relations, I show in a third section how the city is also a place of resistance where public space may be reappropriated and where power may be challenged. This is why cities should not be approached as ‘divided’, but as ‘dividing’. I explore the divided city as a lived environment, *made* by the daily practices of its inhabitants, and focus in particular on the concept of *transgression*. From transgressive tactics (de Certeau, 1980) to ‘out of place’ behaviours, there are many ways to divert and even oppose the attempts of hegemonic groups at imposing their control over urban space. No matter how powerful normative schemes may be, urban inhabitants have always a possibility to escape imposed space and construct their own city.

The second chapter presents my methodology. I first discuss the approaches often followed by researchers of urban divisions and introduce the main guidelines of my study. Second, I present my research planning and data collection in Skopje. Third, I reflect on positionality and ethical considerations. Finally, I describe the data management procedures and analysis of the thesis findings.

In the third chapter, I analyse the history and evolution of Skopje and contrast the officially propagated collective memory of a divided city with an alternative history of modern Skopje, based on available empirical evidence. In particular, I shed light on the favourite scapegoats of the current government: the Ottoman period. I first discuss how stereotypes of Ottoman cities have been reproduced in academic research, before analysing the geographies of Skopje under imperial rule. Finally, I reflect on the ‘European’ modernisation of Skopje.

In the fourth chapter, I examine the evolution of Skopje throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and explore the role of urban politics in the organisation of space and society. I first show that Skopje’s variegated urban form did not start with the Ottoman period, but between the World Wars. I argue that these processes are the result of the Yugoslav Kingdom’s urban policies. I then suggest that the Socialist regime was aware of this legacy but did nothing to alleviate the incipient dividing tendencies of the city, but *de facto* ratified them.

In the fifth chapter, I analyse the ‘city from above’ and explore how present-day Skopje is politically constructed as a divided city. Drawing on Foucault, Lefebvre and Sibley, I analyse how the urban policies of governing elites may be seen as responsible

for current processes of division of urban space. I begin to examine in particular the project Skopje 2014 and show how, by rewriting history, it constructs a new Macedonian imagined community by reshaping a particular space, the symbolically and materially important Macedonia Square. I analyse the pillars on which the construction of this new community is based: antiquisation, army/state power and religion.

In the sixth chapter, I examine present-day Skopje as a place being torn by the politics of territoriality of ethno-national leaders, and analyse in particular how architecture and planning play a major role in the symbolic ethnic cleansing of the city. Drawing on Foucault and Lefebvre, I reflect further on Skopje 2014 as a project that seeks to build barriers between communities, before exploring the reactions it triggered and, particularly, the Albanian project of Skanderbeg Square. Finally, I question these responses and offer a more complex picture of urban politics, marked by negotiation, accommodation and collusion between ethno-national leaders.

In the seventh chapter, I adopt a different perspective, by examining the city ‘from below’. Drawing on Lefebvre’s and de Certeau’s discussions of resistance and transgression, I show that hegemony is as instable as contestable in urban space, and I further complicate the narrative of Skopje as a divided city. I compare the city as it is *conceived* by its elites to the city as it is *lived* by urban dwellers, and examine cases of transgression and resistance to hegemonic representations. I first analyse the city centre through a survey conducted there, which sought to explore the practices and perceptions of urban inhabitants. Following a micro-scale approach, I consider places and practices of transgression, by examining the ‘tactics’ deployed by the residents to cope with imposed strategies of power. Finally, I examine how resistance may be opposed to dominant representations of space by and help build the inhabitants’ own *lived space*.

In conclusion, I briefly outline the paths followed by my analysis, as well as its main implications and findings. I suggest that the conceptual tools developed in the thesis may be particularly useful to investigate power relations in cities subject to dividing processes. I then raise a number of issues that were not addressed in the thesis and suggest avenues for further research.

## – CHAPTER 1 –

# LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I define and analyse the concept of divided city. I review the following bodies of literature in order to establish the context of my thesis and develop my conceptual and analytical tools. I first critically review the literature on urban divisions in order to deconstruct the theoretical assumptions, practical mechanisms and methodological implications of the concept of divided city. Second, I consider urban divisions via theories of spatial politics – drawing in particular on Foucault and Lefebvre – and show how these perspectives help us understand the relationships between space, power and society in ‘divided cities’. Third, based on Lefebvre, de Certeau, Cresswell and Bourdieu, I explore the city as a lived environment and a place where power may be transgressed, resisted and challenged. I examine how the daily practices of its inhabitants may divert and transgress top-down strategies of power, drawing out the manner in which urban inhabitants exercise the capacity to reclaim their rights and construct their own city.

Divisions are often considered by critical urbanism as an inherent characteristic shared by every city in the world. According to this literature, urban divisions are not specific to one category of city – the divided city – but distinguish themselves only by their degree and intensity. A diversity of terms has been coined to describe these processual phenomena, such as segregation, polarisation or fragmentation. Conversely, social scientists have coined another term to designate what is – according to them – a quite different reality: the ‘divided city’. This concept almost exclusively refers to cities marked by a physical and symbolic partition, usually materialised through the presence of peacelines or walls. This division often mirrors a past or present conflict occurring at a larger (usually state) level. Belfast, Nicosia or Jerusalem are examples of such ‘divided cities’. There are many case studies of such divided cities, but few theoretical works or comparative studies. It is on these that I will focus in my review.

Furthermore, very little connection has been made between these two literatures, as if they were designating radically different realities. Robinson (2006) has noted the same lack of connection between ‘global cities’ and ‘urban theory’ on the one hand, and ‘third-world cities’ on the other. Similarly, little room has been left for cities *in-between* – cities that are not *formally* understood to be divided. This category includes a variety of cases, from cities on the verge of being divided to socially and spatially partitioned cities but whose internal borders are not physically materialised. It also includes post-conflict multicultural cities undergoing processes of divisions and homogenisation, such as Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bollens, 2006, Calame and Pasic, 2009). The scarcity of works on *dividing* cities may be explained by the fact that cities torn by an open conflict are more likely to draw attention than places seen as ‘peaceful’. This is particularly the case of a region marked by tensions and conflicts, such as the Balkans. There are case studies of culturally divided cities, such as Montreal or Brussels (Kaplan, 1992; Murphy, 2002), but no systematic work at a wider scale. This quick overview already demonstrates the need to discuss the legitimacy of established categories, question their foundations and analyse the *in between* category.

Moreover, post-socialist and politically transitional cities have been analysed in the wider framework of regional studies or political science which often focus either on property restitution (Andrusz *et al.*, 1996; Crowley, 2003; Harloe, 1996; Smith, 1996) or on the problematic relations to cultural memory and to the socialist past (Milohnić and Švob-Đokić, 2011; Šešić, 2011; Seys, 2002). Ethnic divisions and political transition in urban management have been rarely studied together, as if they are unrelated issues. Either social scientists have focused on the case of post-socialist cities with their own transitional problems (Andrusz *et al.*, 1996; Stanilov, 2007), or they have addressed ethnicity and group conflict in Balkan cities (Baillie, 2012; Bollens, 2006), with no further consideration for their socialist histories and legacies. Skopje fits the first as much as the second category. I will not refer directly to post-socialist literature in this review, but I will take it into account in Chapter 3 in order to understand the role of socialist planning in Skopje.

In many aspects, Skopje could be referred to as an ‘ethno-nationally divided city’. Yet, no concrete wall crosses its territory, apart from the Vardar natural barrier. Its divisions are not as blatant as in the case of a conflict-torn or post-conflict city, where intergroup divisions are physically materialised. For some people, it is just a city ‘like any other’, which cannot escape the fate of socio-spatial fragmentation, but, for others,



it epitomises the case of a divided city. Its supposed divisions may be even more pernicious than those of Belfast or Berlin, since they do not need a wall to exist.

## 1 What is a divided city?

### 1.1 Defining the divided city

Social scientists have conceptualised urban divisions in a variety of ways. Most of these notions have been taken up in common perceptions and policy-making as rallying themes, used to mobilise public institutions and urban inhabitants (Le Goff, 2006). This is why they are polysemous and ambiguous. The notions of urban segregation and its ultimate form, the ghetto, are not new, but new concepts and approaches appeared in the 1980s. Many new qualifiers have been coined, from the ‘dual’ city (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991) to the ‘quartered’ city (Marcuse, 1993), via the ‘shattered’<sup>1</sup> city (Haumont and Lévy, 1998) and, of course, the ‘divided’ city (Fainstain *et al.*, 1992; Fourcault, 1996; Low, 1996). Works have tackled the issues of ‘division’, ‘fragmentation’, ‘polarisation’, ‘break-up’ or ‘disaggregation’. This range of terms shows how difficult it is to refer to urban complexity (Navez-Bouchanine, 2002, 31). The problem is that these concepts refer as much to descriptive as to interpretive categories. They describe a spatial repartitioning of social groups within urban space, but they are also interpretive when they are used to assume that undesired social effects could be fought by a reverse policy (Rémy, 2002). This is why I will first critically review studies of ‘divided cities’, before examining the three main concepts used to designate urban divisions: *segregation*, *polarisation* and *fragmentation*.

#### 1.1.1 Divided cities

Skopje is usually regarded as divided upon ethnic and religious grounds. This division, mirrored at the state level, leaves its mark on urban space. It is also said to induce social segregation: minorities often claim that they are poorly integrated in the state due to their ethnic status. Based on these aspects, the Macedonian capital seems to fit in the

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of ‘shattered’ city is a translation from the French ‘*ville éclatée*’. The authors using this term also refer to the larger process of ‘*éclatement*’ which refers to a ‘break-up’ of urban space. Given that I did not find any official translation of these notions in English, I acknowledge that my translation may be considered not totally exact, but I tried to stay as close as possible to the theoretical meaning of ‘*ville éclatée*’ and ‘*éclatement*’.

category of an *ethno-nationally divided city* – a specific type of urban divisions which I examine here.

The category of the divided city, used by social scientists to refer to cities such as Belfast or Nicosia, is quite recent. In this section, I offer a review of literature on divided cities. Engaging with this literature, I offer further conceptual reflection on the notion of the divided city. The criteria upon which a city is seen as ‘ethno-nationally divided’ are quite precise and not all divided cities fall into this category. I will first attempt to define the divided city, before focusing in particular on the ethno-nationally divided city and analysing its place in the larger society.

Studies of divided cities lack a clear definition of the concept they use to analyse their case-studies. As argued by Anderson (2008:6), the notion of divided city is not ‘a ready-made category with an established general literature’. Most works focus on one case-study, and only a few draw comparisons between different cities and different urban conflicts (Bollens, 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2006; Kliot and Mansfeld, 1999; Anderson, 2008; Murtagh *et al.*, 2008). To Anderson (2006), each case is seen as unique and the category lacks a research literature examining common causal processes and features. The author distinguishes phenomena of divisions in ‘undivided’ cities from ethno-nationally divided cities. Urban studies generally focus on ‘normal’, more or less peaceful cities, marked by social or ethnic segregation, such as New York or Istanbul. Yet, these cities may be considered as divided, but not by nationalism. This is what makes them different from the ‘truly’ divided cities that are ethno-nationally divided cities. The latter are indeed ‘both victims and protagonists, or part and parcel of longstanding and pervasive conflicts, and more specifically national territorial ones’ (Anderson, 2008:7).

This definition marks a rupture with another, more inclusive, understanding of the concept of divided city, as a ‘culmination form of social, economic and political segregation of cities’ (Kliot and Mansfeld, 1999:167). For example, in both American black ghettos and Belfast’s gated neighbourhoods, the principle of exclusion guides segregation between ethnic communities. To refine this definition, the authors added the concept of *partition* which implies control over territory and resources. Referring to state sovereignty, a partition is defined as ‘a division into territorial units having separate political status’. The partition, as a social construct, is ‘the attempt by an

individual or group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena and relationship by delimiting and asserting control over geographical area' (Sack, 1986:19). The divided city addresses the issue of partition as an outcome of contest and conflict on control of territory and resources within the context of segregation (Kliot and Mansfeld, 1999). Whereas spatial separations between groups – based on ethnic, linguistic, religious and/or social and economic differences – are typical of all societies, divided cities are an ultimate form of segregation, in which all the forms of urban livelihood are segregated and where the issue of territory is central. They are, to Kliot and Mansfeld (1999:196), 'the unfortunate final form of group conflict'.

This analysis of the divided city has the merit of linking different elements and emphasising the issue of group control at the urban level. However, this definition only distinguishes divided cities by a matter of degree: New York is as much a divided city as Belfast is. The reference to a 'partition' as a political and institutional process of physical divisions also better fits the cases of cities in which divisions are physically materialised by concrete internal borders which oppose two different institutional, economic and social systems that share the same space. The term 'partitioned city' therefore designates cities such as Berlin or Nicosia, and not New York or Chicago.

Hepburn (2004:2) distinguishes 'a smaller number of cases, [where] animosity has been sharpened by the additional factor that neither group will recognise the political and/or cultural sovereignty of the other.' He uses the notion of 'contested city' to refer to an urban centre 'in which two or more ethnically-conscious groups – divided by religion, language and/or culture and perceived history – co-exist in a situation where neither group is willing to concede supremacy to the other.' Anderson (2008) further refines this understanding, underlining that New York or Chicago may be ethnically divided, but they are not nationally divided. They may host strong ethnic divisions, but these divisions are not associated with any wider national contestation over the state. Here enters the notion of 'contested state', a state whose territorial sovereignty is contested. Divided cities are a place of nationalist conflicts over statehood. Gaffikin and Morrissey (2011:7) also distinguish two types of divided city:

the first where the conflict is centred on cleavages of class, race, religious affiliation and ethnicity; and the second, where these fractures and frissons and the state's role in addressing related issues of pluralism and equity, are interpenetrated with durable disputes about sovereignty and the legitimacy of the state itself.

To Anderson (2008:6), the ‘ethno-nationally divided’ city combines these issues of ‘ethnically divided’ and that of ‘state-divided’ cities by ‘confront[ing] the added problems and causations of ethno-national division over state’. Compared with multicultural cities in which national sovereignty is not a subject of contention, ‘territory and space in “divided cities” are subject to a politics of resistance and dominance’ in which ‘the control of space reproduces the ongoing struggle over the legitimacy of the state’ – a condition Skopje meets (Nagle, 2009a:133). Bollens (2002:3) further defines the divided city as one in which ‘ethnic identity and nationalism combine to create pressures for group rights, autonomy or territorial separation’. Anderson (2008) draws a parallel between the location in space of divided cities and their on-going process of ethno-national conflict. The situation of the city in a wider ethnic interface area might account for its divisions. Yet, while there are many cases of ‘ethnically divided cities’ that are located in areas of ethnic interaction, the combination of such divisions with the national factor is not that frequent.

Anderson (2008) excludes the case of Berlin, which is not ethnically divided, and apartheid cities of South-Africa, in which state sovereignty was not contested. He argues that ethno-nationally divided cities all have in common their past belonging to an empire. Also, all were located at the periphery of empires. Wilson and Donnan (1998:10) suggest that ‘the relationships of power and identity at borders and between the borders and their respective states are problematic precisely because the state cannot always control the political structures which it establishes at its extremities’. Anderson goes further by pointing out the causal interaction between imperialism and nationalism in the failure of state- and nation-building processes, at the edge and during the endgames of empires. He argues that empires created political entities out of pre-existing ethnic difference, and that politicised and hierarchised ethnicities have later tended to become the basis for competing nationalisms. This argument can be applied to the Balkan case, where ‘divided cities’ appear as the historical by-product of the application of the nation-state principle in the region. Different and overlapping claims on territory inevitably led to clashes between ethnic groups, a process analysed in the Balkans by Cole (1981:127-128) who analyses the problem of ‘ethnic shatter zones’ where no ‘state boundaries could be drawn without leaving substantial numbers of one’s own people on the far side and including equally substantial numbers of the neighbouring state’s people on the near side.’ The break-up of Yugoslavia was the last stage of this transition, with Macedonia being a prime example of this process.

Anderson's analysis – which he justifies by stressing the role played by cities in nation – enables a link to be made between the literature on ethnicity and nationalism and that on urban space and state-building. The place of divided cities may actually be central to wider societal processes. The 'ethno-nationally divided city' may become a focal point for unresolved nationalistic ethnic conflict. Rather than being the primary cause for intergroup conflict, it may also be a platform of expression of conflicting sovereignty claims and tensions between groups. In the first case, urban space is seen as a battleground between 'homeland' ethnic groups, each proclaiming the city as its own (Bollens, 1998). The centrality and symbolism of the city, as well as the close juxtaposition of antagonistic groups in the same space, exacerbate intergroup tensions and the probability for violent actions. As a flashpoint, the city worsens ethnic conflict at the national level.

The divided city may be a mirror to larger societal patterns. The level of urban divisions may be an indicator of the inequity of power relations within the whole society. In Nicosia, Jerusalem, Derry or Belfast, internal divisions reflect larger national pattern: Turkish/Greek Cypriot, Palestinian/ Jewish, and nationalist Irish Catholic/unionist Protestants divisions. Bollens (2006:75) refers to the notion of 'conduits' to characterize the divided city as reflecting 'larger societal patterns' – the conduit running 'from society at-large to the city'. Cities are here 'channels between larger governing ideologies and on-the-ground lived experience (Bollens, 2006:75). In some cases, as in Belfast or Mostar, local urban borders 'act as proxies in the political fight over disputed state' (Anderson, 2008:19). However, this approach restricts the city's role to being merely a 'victim' of the state divisions (Anderson, 2008). To Bollens (2006), cities are not simple reflectors of larger societal dynamics, but have causal influences and exert independent effects running in the other direction – from the city to the larger society. It is more relevant to see them as 'catalysts' or 'prisms' (Bollens, 1998a, 1998b and 2002).

Cities have their own spatial, political and social dynamics, certainly influenced by extra-urban forces, but never fully controlled by them. This suggests that a city's capacity to address issues of group identity can run at different speeds than a society's at-large. (Bollens, 2006:75)

The physical and political structure of the city (social interactions, economic interdependence and intergroup proximity) modifies the relationship between the broader causes of community strife and the forms and levels it takes on the ground. This

relationship can anticipate or stimulate broader societal progress. When there is a disjunction between urban and societal trajectories, it can also impede national attempts to reconcile groups (Bollens, 2006). Depending on the perspective, urban space may be a key protagonist in the way divisions express themselves and evolve.

While the above studies provide valuable information regarding urban divisions, caution must be advised before applying their results to the case of Skopje. While urban divisions may increase or decrease over time, depending on a variety of factors, using a static concept to describe them may undermine a dynamic understanding of these phenomena. Brand and Fregonese (2013), identifying a lack of studies on the early and late stages of division, emphasise the need to study *polarisation* and the attempts of *de-polarisation*, rather than *polarised* situations. Moreover, as underlined by Allegra *et al.* (2012:563), a static approach may often rely on ‘single-factor explanations’ of urban divisions: a number of studies mainly focus on ethnicity and religion as the main divisive element in urban space – along with nationalism in the case of the ethno-nationally divided city. Yet, this approach is problematic since it diminishes the importance of other factors and implies to perceive divided groups as homogeneous, stable and incompatible, as are the perceived identities on which they are based. Even when hegemonic practices are critically analysed, as in Sorkin (2005), or urban resistance to hegemonic powers studied, as in Yacobi’s (2007; 2009) work on Lod, the reality of collective identities is not much discussed, nor are alternatives to ethno-national cleavages examined. Analysing everyday social relations which challenge both Israeli and Palestinian nationalisms in the ‘mixed town’ of Jaffa, Monterescu (2007:174) underlines that such processes have largely gone unnoticed in studies of Israel/Palestine, ‘a field dominated by “methodological nationalism” and [with a] tendency to equate the nation-state with society’. Sa’ar (2007) similarly writes that critical research may have examined situations of domination and resistance in ‘mixed towns’, but the issue of cooperation across ethnic and class lines has been far less studied. Finally, the concept of divided city, and in particular that of ethno-nationally divided city, leads researchers to exclusively study cities where divisions are already materialised in space, through a wall or a peaceline, and therefore miss cities where divisions are not so visible or materially symbolised – this being in particular the case of Skopje. In order to understand the processes at work in the Macedonian capital, I turn to

critical urban theory, which examines urban divisions as dynamic, complex and multidimensional processes, and which I will present here.

### *1.1.2 Urban division: which terms for which reality?*

Referring to *segregation* is not neutral and the ideas associated with the term are manifold (Roncayolo, 1994). To Nightingale (2012), segregation is not a mechanical, but a complex, ‘messy’ process. The term was first forged to explain phenomena of ethnic neighbourhoods, in a wider interpretation of – what was then understood as – racial or biological differentiations. It carries strong negative connotations. Le Goff (2006) shows its violent dimension, by reminding us of the Latin etymology of the word *grex, gregis*, ‘herd’: *segregatio* designates the ‘act of ostracizing from the herd’. This etymology is a source of ambiguity for two main reasons (Brun, 1994). First, segregation refers to a process of pushing something or someone outside of a group. This has two dimensions: a static dimension, purely descriptive and empirical – as in the observation of a spatial separation of different categories of people – and a dynamic dimension which explains the processes of segregation, and whose diachronic perspective may appear useful for urban research (Le Goff, 2006). Brun (1994) stresses the common shift from an analytical meaning of segregation to a value judgment. The idea of a spatial separation between groups is taken as an indicator – and a cause – of the different aspects of injustice undergone by disadvantaged people. Second, this etymology implies an intentional practice. It opposes an agent who is responsible for segregation to one who is subject to it (Brun, 1994). This second aspect is more problematic. ‘Segregation’ here implies a deliberate practice that aims at relegating a part of a wider population outside of the areas occupied by other parts of this population. We get here on to the notions of differentiation, separation and discrimination – and their ultimate urban concretization, the *ghetto*. The notions of segregation and ghetto are often alternatively employed to designate ultimate forms of separation between social groups (Le Goff, 2006). I will now show that the ghetto is more than an extreme form of segregation.

The ghetto designates a part of the city where members of a minority group live. It comes from the Italian *ghèto*, ‘slag’ or ‘waste’, and was first used in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Venetian Republic to refer to an area of the city, Cannaregio, where Jews were compelled to live by force of law, and where slag was stored. The notion then came to

designate any Jewish quarters in European cities, which were often the outgrowths of the bounded area instituted by the surrounding authorities. The notion took a negative connotation in the following centuries, implying social segregation and poor conditions of life in a deteriorated urban environment. Traditional Jewish ghettos, however, were not always places of poverty: in Venice, for instance, it was home to an affluent Jewish population.

Wacquant (2006) reminds us of the universality of the ghetto, by listing the terms used in different languages to designate places stigmatised by a society and ranked lowest in the urban hierarchy. Peach (1996:379) defines the term in a static way, as ‘an end in itself’. There is a ghetto when, first, the whole population of an area is composed by one specific group, and, second, when most of its members are settled in such areas (Peach, 1983, cf. Le Goff, 2006). Wacquant (2006) opts for a more dynamic definition, which I favour, emphasising the processual dimension of the ghetto, an area characterised by a worsening of social problems. In a more recent article (2012), he argues that the ghetto, as a sociological concept, is not merely synonymous with poverty, segregation and ethnic gathering. It is also part of a functional and structural logic which seeks to minimise contacts with a stigmatised community, while maximising its material profits. What results are both a place of closure and control, and a space of protection and integration.

Wacquant (2006:281) also underlines that the notions of ‘discrimination and segregation should not be confused with ghettoisation’. He argues that these different forms of domination may be combined or may support each other, but they are distinct and irreducible to one another. While it is possible to speak about a ‘ghetto’ in the case of Afro-American areas in American cities such as Chicago, the term is not appropriate to designate suburban neighbourhoods in Europe. According to him, four elements characterize the ghetto: stigmata, constraint, spatial confinement and institutional interlocking. A ghetto is:

‘[a] socio-organizational apparatus which displays space in order to combine two antinomic goals: 1) maximize the material benefits of a group considered blemished and blemishing and 2) minimise any intimate contact with its members so as to remove the threat of corrosion and symbolic contagion they are supposed to carry’ (Wacquant, 2005:10, cf. Le Goff, 2006:24).

The Afro-American ghetto is characterised by spatial closure and the development of local institutions to protect members of the group confined by the dominant one (Le



Goff, 2006). Brun (1994) argued that the 16<sup>th</sup> century Jewish ghettos of Venice had a twofold aspect. First, as the etymology of the word ‘ghetto’ indicates, Jewish communities were ‘thrown’ in defined areas, assigned to live in closed and isolated places. Second, these ‘ghettos’, as they then developed elsewhere, were placed under the protection of a laic or religious authority, responding to the need to be ‘protected’. Communities were put in areas in which they would not suffer from their inferior position in society. During pogroms, the walls surrounding the ghetto were closed to protect the community. It was also the case during religious events, such as Christmas or Easter, but this time in order to prevent the Jews from leaving the area in these periods. This begs the question of the (in)voluntary aspect of segregation, which I will explore in the following part of my analysis. I will first shed more light on the concepts of polarisation and fragmentation.

Among the concepts forged in the 1980s, the notion of *polarisation* quickly became central in urban research. This term was thought in a wider social and economic scope and was associated with the idea of duality. It was coined to account for a complexity of social and spatial processes which escaped the centre-periphery scheme. It refers to increasing urban divisions and differentiations between a highly qualified stratum and an under-qualified and under-paid one (Sassen, 1991). According to this approach, current urban processes are marked by a decline of the intermediary classes, and the resulting polarisation of incomes and qualifications is paralleled by spatial polarisation. This notion depends upon whether we discuss issues relative to social or to ethnic belonging (Le Goff, 2006). In the American context, ethnic minorities and migrants usually have under-qualified and low-remunerated jobs, since they often have no other choice than accepting inferior working conditions. The cultural origin of the individuals is a source of their social – and then spatial – discrimination. Ethnic and social belonging overlap in the context of the primacy of the ‘financial industry’ which recomposes urban space (Sassen, 1991). Acknowledging that ‘cities are frequently divided geographically by ethnicity, race, income and age’, Bollens (1998:188) distinguishes between cases of cities where there is conflict over service delivery, housing, land use or facility sitting, and those marked by ‘a deeper, more intransigent type of urban conflict – urban “polarisation” when ethnic claims combine and impinge on distributional issues. Polarised cities host ‘alternative and directly opposing cultures that are “contestable”’ (Agnew *et al.*, 1984, cf. Bollens, 1998:189).

Bollens' notion of *polarisation* is different than that of Sassen and may shed light on processes at work in Skopje. He refers to cities shared by different ethnic groups and in which a larger intergroup contestation is mirrored at the urban level. Issues such as municipal distribution of resources or land use access are disputed among ethnic groups. This definition focuses on ethnic belonging as the main factor for polarisation, which is here analysed as cultural. The individuals' social status is only examined as a consequence of particular urban 'ethnic' policies. In Sassen's socio-economic understanding of polarisation, the ethnic factor was seen as possibly overlapping with social differentiation. While polarisation was there used as a concept to refer to general trends within world cities, Bollens's (1998) usage restricts it to specific cities, such as Belfast, Johannesburg or Jerusalem. As the author also refers to these cities as 'divided cities', I will examine further his work in the next section.

I will define the concept of polarisation based on these socio-economic and cultural approaches. Both view urban polarisation as broad phenomena in which social and cultural statuses may intersect. Contrary to *segregation*, *urban polarisation* is not thought as a local phenomenon. It is seen as mediated by and part of larger trends which go beyond urban space itself, including national or international processes. Whatever the forms or degrees of urban divisions, they should be examined as both spatial and temporal processes. I share Brand and Fregonese's (2013:4) view of polarisation as a 'procedural, relative and contextual phenomenon'. A *process* of polarisation takes place before reaching a *state* of division and 'involves two (or more) poles that increase the *relative* distance from each other'. The concepts of segregation and ghetto refer to a static reality, but the notion of polarisation enables a dynamic understanding of urban divisions, as part of wider trends. This dynamic dimension is also present in the last concept I will present here: *fragmentation*.

The main difference between the notion of urban fragmentation and the other concepts lies in its focus on the city as a *unit*. It leads to a dynamic analysis of the urban environment in terms of social bonds and organic solidarity. Studies of urban fragmentation examine the comportments of individuals and groups who challenge this unity. Fragmentation (or *secession*) illustrates a rupture or lack of solidarity among individuals and groups within urban space. This is, for example, the case of gated communities (Madoré, 2004). Vidal Rojas (2002) refers to *social dislocation*: a 'break'

or 'split' in the physical structure of the city and the dislocation of its symbolic values. He argues that, given that urban space is commonly perceived as an indivisible unit, the 'urban' is usually confused with the 'city': a cultural value is confused with a material entity. According to Navez-Bouchanine (2002), urban fragmentation is a process of disaggregation or collective disaffiliation. It brings groups to appropriate space in an exclusionary manner, without reference to a more general community. Urban society then turns into a sum of territories marked by strong identities, with groups living in a relatively autarchic way. They develop their own social and cultural reference points and refuse common rules or norms. Every group seeks a place with which to exclusively identify as its own (Vidal Rojas, 2002).<sup>2</sup> The tension between the unity and divisibility of urban space is mirrored by the debate between identification and differentiation: individuals seek to differentiate themselves from the others and, in the same time, to identify themselves with a larger entity. To Vidal Rojas (2002) this process prevails in intermediary territories such as buffer-zones. These elements of analysis will be particularly informative in my analysis of Skopje as a dividing city.

The concept of fragmentation is a tool that can be used to ask whether the city should be seen as a unified entity marked by disintegration or rather an aggregate of fragments in dynamic trends of interaction. To Vidal Rojas (2002), the idea of urban fragmentation means recognising the existence of different cities within the city. Navez-Bouchanine (2002) argues that worldwide cities are becoming sums of fragments, each with specific modes of urban space appropriation. These juxtaposed segments evolve independently. No encounters or modes of negotiation are possible, only systematic avoidance. The violent aspect of such processes is often emphasised. Urban fragmentation is seen as a 'break-up' of the urban structure, leading to a *shattered* city (Haumont and Lévy, 1998). The issue of shattered city (or shattered society) is related to the one of identity (May *et al.* 1998). Fragmentation here differs from *segregation*, which is compatible with the idea of a common urbanity. While segregation separates urban inhabitants, they can still be included within the same urban system (Bénit *et al.*, 2007). Conversely, fragmentation means a multidimensional withdrawal on a territory and a rejection of the urban social tie. The existence of such processes of fragmentation calls into question the idea of the city as a unifying entity. Fragmentation also differs from *polarisation*. Polarisation implies that cities are a place of extreme contrasts,

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<sup>2</sup> This issue had already been addressed by the seminal works of the Chicago School and urban ecology, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

where separated communities hardly communicate. With fragmentation, however, the withdrawal of groups is seen as relative. Many ‘closed’ communities still preserve or develop significant connections with other neighbourhoods – an element which I will explore in the case of Skopje.

Urban fragmentation is a complex, multidimensional process. Bénit *et al.* (2007) in particular distinguish four dimensions: (i) *spatial* fragmentation, which is harmful to the image of the city: the juxtaposition of heterogeneous city fragments and an increasing number of walls, gates, elements of material closure which affect the neighbourhoods characterised by social mixity; (ii) *economic* fragmentation: the different parts of the city stop working together as a whole; (iii) *political* or *institutional* fragmentation: the city is no more administered as a unit, but made up of autonomous political or fiscal fragments<sup>3</sup>; (iv) *social* fragmentation: the rise of new lines of fractures within urban society and the disappearance of a common urban identity. The authors warn against the common sensationalisation of urban fragmentation – especially in media reports. As they recognise, it is problematic to infer the structures of social relations from the observation of spatial forms.

This framework could be used in the case of Skopje, which seems to combine spatial, economic, political, social and – a dimension which is here absent perspective – cultural (ethnic and religious) fragmentation. Yet, as I will show in my thesis, inferring social and ethnic relations from what the most visible aspects of division, spatial division, may be problematic and lead to a reification of urban divisions. Spatial divisions, as in monoethnic neighbourhoods, do not necessarily mean that these areas are completely closed to each other. Spatial divisions may also be sensationalised, with specific areas taken as epitome of larger divisions of the city. This may also be the case of neighbourhoods which seem monoethnic but which are actually home to various ethnic groups.

Drawing together these threads, I argue that each notion provides a different, yet complementary, highlight on urban divisions. *Segregation* underlines the complex origins and often multi-dimensional forms of the phenomenon. Yet, using this concept often leads to reify aspects of urban space by following a synchronic perspective.

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<sup>3</sup> This questions the metropolitan or regional planning scale, which is superseded by the increasing power of the local level and the privatisation of urban space.

Conversely, the notion of *polarisation* draws attention on the different aspects taken by urban divisions (social, economic, ethnic, cultural) and, in particular, the need to adopt a diachronic approach. This processual perspective is also present in the concept of urban *fragmentation*, whose violent forms may question the very existence of the city.

Second, this review showed the need to understand urban divisions, not as straightforward and absolute lines of separation, but as permeable and relative. The resulting fragments are often heterogeneous and may evolve depending on the place and context. In my analysis of Skopje, I will attempt to understand the reason why the city is often seen as home to clear-cut and definite divisions. I will particularly assess the role of urban elites in the construction of such an image.

Finally, I would argue for the need of a multi-dimensional and non-linear approach to urban divisions. As my review showed, spatial, social and cultural distances are not necessarily the same. Spatial mixing and proximity may for example induce social segregation. Movements of population through the city may also be markers of separation. Territories follow different patterns of crossing, overlapping and intermingling and this is why a multi-dimensional perspective is particularly useful to account for this complexity. This implies considering both the most visible and less obvious elements of division, with a focus in particular on network practices and interactions between urban fragments. This also means analysing the various forms taken by the appropriation of space and the territorial markers through which people identify with a place. These different aspects could be brought together to refine our understanding of urban divisions. In what follows, I analyse the processes by which a city may become divided.

## **1.2 Explaining urban divisions**

I will here examine the issue of the roots of urban divisions from the perspective of the choice/constraint debate. This discussion flourished in the works of English scholars in the 1960s. Its main question was whether the segregation of migrants could be explained by the discrimination they were subjected to, or rather by a voluntary process of gathering. The question of choice and constraint may directly link this discussion to the issue of the divided city. A similar question may be asked here – whether the division should be explained by processes of discrimination which act as an external force on the agents, or rather as a voluntary process, stimulated by the agents. I will first

discuss voluntary, then imposed segregation. From this, I distinguish structural and mental segregation. Finally, I will also analyse segregation from the perspective of marginalisation.

In the choice/constraint debate, Dahya (1974) argues that segregation is voluntary and acts as a means to promote and sustain the specific social and cultural needs of community members. According to this view, individuals prefer physical proximity rather than better residential areas, and accept being separated from other communities to be better grouped together. This tendency is mostly due to the existence of informal networks and the will to preserve the cultural structures of the group. The large panels of migrant institutions anchor members of a group and restrain any individual attempts to be geographically dispersed within the city. Brun (1994) also discusses a psychological dimension which guides voluntary segregation. An affective attachment may link the inhabitants of stigmatized areas to their residential neighbourhoods. The increasing case of 'gated communities' illustrates this voluntary aspect of segregation. The inhabitants choose to separate themselves from the larger society, usually to protect themselves from perceived threats of delinquency and 'intruders'.

Besides the psychological dimension of voluntary segregation, it also has certain structural forms, which express themselves spatially. The Chicago School systematically tackled this relation between intergroup social distance and its spatial translation in the urban framework. According to its main thinkers, the tendency for communities to gather is voluntary (Park and Burgess, 1925; Grafmeyer and Joseph, 2004). Its urban ecology addresses the urban environment from a social Darwinist view and sees the city as a place of competition. In this view, individuals gather into communities of interests in order to protect themselves from the violent aspects of such competition. The spatial translation of this process results in the gathering of migrants sharing the same cultural, moral and linguistic characteristics, so as to better organize and structure themselves. This is a dynamic process, characterized by perpetual mobility and the recomposition of neighbourhoods and cultures. This approach does not negatively perceive the temporary concentration of communities, but as part of a wider 'race relations cycle' (Park, 1950).

Voluntary segregation has been vividly criticised by many 1970s urban theoreticians, especially by neo-Marxist thinkers (Castells, 1974; Harvey, 1979;

Lefebvre, 1974). According to them, segregation is not voluntary but imposed. Segregation is here analysed in the larger spectre of a critique of capitalist ideology, which is seen as sustaining urban divisions and concentrations of specific groups within an unequal social and economic system. In this perspective, the urban environment is determined by processes of partition and stratification. Such urban stratification mirrors the stratification of the social system which is inherent to any class-society. To Lefebvre (1978) in particular, imposed segregation is a political tool to maintain and enforce the power of a dominant group. To him, the hegemonic production of space seeks to centralize its power by the construction of segregation. Social space soon becomes a collection of ghettos. The capitalist and statist extension produces centres of power and peripheries of exclusion in urban space, in order to concentrate decision-making power in the centre and shape 'new colonial space', subjugated and exploited by the centre (Lefebvre, 1978:85). According to Castells (1974:227, cf. Le Goff, 2006:28), urban segregation does not only reflect social hierarchy, but is the product 'of some social situations and of a particular location within the urban structure'. I examine here some aspects of this imposed segregation, with the notions of exploitation and contagion.

One reason for it is the will to maintain the conditions of group exploitation. Ethnicity is an element among others to stratify individuals. Racism is another instrument for dominant groups to exploit the working class – and a political strategy conceived to divide it. Exploited ethnic groups are part of a wider exploited social class. Residential segregation facilitates their exploitation and the reproduction of class relations (Le Goff, 2006). Another aspect of imposed segregation is the will to protect the group and 'purify' it. Brun (1994) shows that segregation often takes its roots in the threat the excluded group may represent for the dominant group. Discriminatory measures borrow from the vocabulary of disease and medicine: segregating groups are a means to protect oneself from potential 'contagions'. This contagion is as much physical as moral, enclosing concerns of mixing and miscegenation. The group which protects itself from the other group fears to lose its own identity, its cultural and moral values. This process implies a clear identification of the categories of the excluded and the non-excluded, through the establishment of a variety of criteria – most of which are of a qualitative nature. Segregated populations are excluded on the basis of defined features, such as their colour, religion, ethnicity or social status.

According to the imposed segregation perspective, segregation is often a result of intentional practices, norms and procedures of the 'dominant' group. Refusing to

have any contact or to intermingle is openly assumed and displayed by the group which holds the power to exclude another group from its 'own' territory.

Both perspectives – voluntary and imposed segregation – miss a third dimension of the phenomenon. Actually, segregation cannot be defined only as an identified, voluntary and potentially institutionalised process of ostracisation (Roncayolo, 1994). It should also be understood in terms of inequality in group repartition and practices – an inequality which results in more or less visible and readable qualifications in urban space. Here, segregation neither results only from a voluntary act of the community, nor is it imposed on it from the exterior. It is a by-product of structural inequalities between groups. This 'structural' view departs from the idea that there is an agent who causes the segregation. Instead, segregation results of more complex processes. The voluntary and imposed segregation perspectives are seen as neglecting also the degrees of segregation – taken as a yes/no issue. Segregation may actually not be as absolute as it appears. Segregated neighbourhoods are often not homogenous and not completely closed. Wacquant (2006) shows that the French suburbs – or *banlieues* – are first characterised by their social and cultural heterogeneity, and second by the degree of 'openness' and exchange with other neighbourhoods. I will explore in particular the issue of the discrepancy between the perception of urban segregation and its reality in the lived experience of its inhabitants in the case of Skopje.

I will here shed new light on segregation with the notion of marginalisation and discuss several ways to identify processes leading to segregation. Schelling (1978) distinguishes three main processes of segregation: (i) a process which results from an organised action, legal or not, by way of force or exclusion; (ii) a non-intentional process that may come as an effect of resource inequalities and of positions produced by social differentiation; (iii) a collective result of a combination of individual discriminatory comportments, i.e. comportments which denote a perception attached to individual features (sex, age, colour, etc.) or any element serving as a basis for the perceptions which have the capacity to influence decisions – and lead to segregation. The first process relates to the idea of imposed segregation. The second is a system-theoretic reformulation of structurally-induced segregation. The third may equally be understood in terms of voluntary or imposed segregation, but it focuses on the act of qualification as generating segregation – here segregation is a result of discourse or behaviour.



The notion of segregation is not limited to its residential component: spatial proximity may indeed imply social distance. Wacquant (2006:240) sees spatial separation as radicalising the objective and subjective realities of exclusion from the society. He refers to the concept of 'urban marginality' to explain the new trends at work in some areas of Western cities. These forms of advanced marginality are 'new forms of excluding closure that result in a pushback at the margins of social and physical space'. To him, the regime of marginality has seven distinct properties working as (i) a factor of instability and social insecurity, (ii) a functional disconnection from macroeconomic structures, (iii) territorial fixation and stigmatisation, (iv) a sense of social indignity that can only be mitigated by reporting the stigmata to an 'Other', (v) spatial alienation and resulting dissolution of 'place' – close to Augé's (1992) perspective, (vi) the loss of a hinterland – preventing from any possibility of withdrawal, and, finally, (vii) social and symbolical fragmentation, within a context of class decomposition. These different aspects show that the residential component is only one aspect of the social differentiation of cities.

After having discussed voluntary, imposed and structural segregation, I distinguish a fourth aspect: mental segregation. Wacquant (2006:201) also emphasises the mental structures of marginality: 'the territorial indignity and its corrosive impact on the form and texture of the local social structure, and the main cleavages which organize the inhabitants' consciousness and relations'. The state support – or relative tolerance – of segregation and the recognition of divisions only intensify the accumulation of dispossession and exacerbate the destructive consequences of marginality. Brun further elaborates on the mental aspect of segregation, which results in the difficulty of measuring levels of segregation. To a quantitative, 'objective geography' of segregation, he opposes a qualitative, 'imaginary geography' which expresses itself in the discourse of different social agents, and which shows appreciable distortions' (1994:27). Since the imaginary geography often diverges from the objective geography, the issue of perceptions and representations is central to that of segregation, from both an internal and external point of view. Following Brun, I suggest that researchers should not restrict themselves to a quantitative analysis of segregation, but take into account its qualitative components, and therefore modify the social scientific instruments and categories of analysis of segregation. For instance, the 'neighbourhood' is a lived environment that does not match the common understanding of segregation – thought as a space made of delimited territorial entities which fit together according to a linear

hierarchy. In my analysis of Skopje, I will pay particular attention to the imaginary geography of segregation, through a detailed analysis of urban residents' representations, perceptions and discourses.

### **1.3 Managing urban divisions**

Students of urban fragmentation have either examined 'the ethnology of intermingled and socially mixed places' or their 'institutional and political fragmentation' (Rhein and Elissalde, 2004:123-124). These two aspects have frequently been associated. 'A direct intellectual connection has been established between the political fragmentation of territory and the worsening of spatial segregation, each reinforcing one another' (Estèbe and Talandier, 2005:38, cf. Le Goff, 2006:41). An important notion here is that of *governance* and the subsequent analysis of the effects induced by city management. The management of intergroup relations within urban space occupies a significant place in the literature of divided cities. The divided city is seen as a place affected by intense inter-communal conflict and violence reflecting ethnic and nationalist fractures (Bollens, 1998a). I will first focus here on the notion of group competition on which urban divisions rest, before analysing in more detail the issue of urban management.

Urban divisions along ethno-national lines are described as resulting from a process of mobilisation of groups competing for their exclusionary right to the city:

To enhance its power, each community mobilizes its members through the construction of difference, as a convenient platform for reinforcing ethnic and racial solidarity. This does not take place in isolation but by groups in constant relation (often contestation) with other groups and interest [...] Competition for spatial, cultural and political resources includes control over territory, relation to place, and the right to cultural expression. (Tzfadia & Yiftachel, 2004:43)

In his analysis of Belfast, Nagle (2009a and 2009b) places the right to access the city centre and public space as central to the claims formulated by groups in conflict. The public space is a 'crucible' for groups to test their rights in the wider society.

The 'politics of territoriality', as deployed by nationalist leaders, have an essential impact on divided cities. One of the first goals of ethno-national entrepreneurs is to create purified and homogeneous spaces which legitimize a series of discursive activities and social group practices (Shirlow, 2003; cf. Nagle, 2009a). I would like to

stress that this connection between a nation (ethnically defined) and a territory was foreign to the Balkan Ottoman society. While the territoriality of the nation and that of the state had found a relative convergence in Western Europe, the application of the nation-state model turned problematic in South-Eastern Europe. In a space characterised by the overlapping of its iconographic strata, the territorial representations forged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the new nation could not converge. This resulted in states endowing the main ethnic group with exclusive rights within the national territory, while treating the other communities as minorities external to the nation. The capital cities, as the main showcase of the new states' choices, bear the traces of this opposition. As I will argue in the case of Macedonia, the policies implemented by the nation-state are often in contradiction with the reality of national territories where ethnic groups are interwoven.

Yiftachel and Ghanem (2004) suggest that ethnicising territory resorts to structural segregation to facilitate the expansion of the group in power, and the construction of minorities as a 'threat' to the project of 'purifying' ethnic spaces. Divided cities are torn by the antagonistic strategies of groups which seek to ethnicise territories. Power contests play a central role. To Murtagh *et al.* (2008), such competition is not simply reducible to consensual management or finite agreement. It does not only take the form of a symbolic competition for the city but intergroup conflict concerns distributional issues at the municipal level – service delivery, the allocation of resources, land use compatibility, etc. However, when combined with ethnic and nationalist claims, as in divided cities, these potential factors take on a very different salience in group competition. Bollens (1998:189) analyses the impact the intersection of nationalism and urban system has on urban governance. According to him, 'the role of urban policy in ethnically polarised cities is problematic in that urban policy-makers must contend with both the particular exigencies of daily urban life and broader ideological imperatives. With the legitimacy of the political framework disputed, service delivery and policy regarding the use of space are transformed into major territorial conflicts.' To appreciate the role of policy-makers and urban elites in divisions, I will now examine the issue of urban management.

Studies of divided cities sees urban management as often determined by the ethno-nationalist claims and aims of the groups which share urban space. To Bollens

(1998a:191), ‘fundamental ideology in an urban environment is implemented primarily through urban planning and policy decisions that seek to reify its vision on the ground [...]. Urban implementers of ideological goals seek to give concrete meaning to ideological goals such as political control, ethnic separation, security, or fairness’. This is why ‘the emphasis should not concentrate on the conduct of planners and their practices but rather on the broader power structures’ (Murtagh *et al.*, 2008:51). Yiftachel and Huxley (2000) refer to the ‘dark side of planning’ as a ‘double-edged sword’ which may either exert domination and cause inequalities, when used as a means to repress and control subordinate groups, or, on the contrary, may be a key to foster equal and ‘rational’ development. According to Bollens (1998a:1993), ‘the maintenance of group identity is critical to the nature of interethnic relations in a polarised city, and can be affected by urban government actions’. To illustrate this connection between ideology and planning, Kliot and Mansfield (1999) show that partitioned cities often give rise to separate systems of urban governance, directly paralleling intergroup divisions. Cities such as Nicosia, Berlin or Jerusalem have all witnessed the emergence of dual urban infrastructures.

However, the governing ideology may not always be translated into urban policies in a straightforward way: ‘Ideology, to be actualised, must be translated into technical prescriptions that seek to move a society or [...] a city toward final goals or vision. Yet, ideology may be fraught with ambiguity that engenders multiple interpretations as to which actions are appropriate to achieve chosen ends’ (Bollens, 1998:191). While, in some cases, there is a concordance between ideology and urban policy, there may also be a disconnection between the ideological pursuit of ethno-nationalist goals and the outcomes of policy implementation. The complex interdependencies of social, economic and psychological factors that compose the urban arena may make it difficult for ideologies to directly shape the city. ‘Formal ideology [is] not always [...] readily translatable onto the urban landscape’ (Bollens, 1998a:191). Because of this, social scientists have to be all the more cautious and attentive when studying divided cities.

Bollens (1998a, 1998b, 2002) distinguishes four urban political strategies with respect to ethno-national divisions which I will use in my analysis of urban management in Skopje. First, the *neutral* urban strategy is associated with a government’s broader civic ideology according to which urban planning should follow functional-technical criteria. The role of urban planning is not to ‘change society’. Planners should address

only the symptoms, and not the root causes, of urban problems by depoliticising and ‘de-ethnicising’ them. This strategy is deeply rooted in an Anglo-Saxon tradition, and a good example of a divided city where it is applied is Belfast. Second, the *partisan* strategy appears when the city’s governing ideology merges with one group’s ethno-national ideology and assumes an ethnic (or religious) understanding of citizenship. By choosing side and seeking to give a monopoly or preferential access to both policy-making and urban territory, urban governance becomes a regressive agent of change that exerts an ideology of domination in the urban arena and landscape. The city of Jerusalem has been governed by this type of urban management. Third, the *equity* strategy gives primacy to ethnic affiliation to compensate for and decrease intergroup inequalities. The ethnic criterion is here used in allocating urban services and spending. This is the case of contemporary Johannesburg, whose urban policy also has some shared characteristics with Bollens’ last strategy, the *resolver* strategy. The latter is the most demanding strategy: it aims at transcending urban-based symptoms by solving the root causes of divisions. By resorting to means such as minority empowerment, it seeks to resolve, and not only manage, conflicts, in order to establish peaceful intergroup coexistence within the city (Bollens, 1998a, 1998b, 2002). The actual outcomes of these strategies may differ from what is expected by urban planners. For example, Belfast’s neutral strategy reproduced sectarian space and reified divisions in the city (Murtagh, 1999; Bollens, 1998a, 1998b, 2002). Even in its most ‘neutral’ or ‘unbiased’ form, urban management always impact on group mobilisation and divisions. Urban management is not a neutral actor, but it plays a central role in shaping the city.

As argued by the above studies, urban management may be strongly affected by ethno-national divisions. In turn, urban policies in ethno-nationally divided cities may affect not only the material, but also the psychological forms of intergroup relations and their relative stability or volatility. In my thesis, I will consider how urban planning may be manipulated by groups and political leaders and link these processes with theories of urban fragmentation. Studies of divided cities show that the general citywide interest is relegated and subordinated to the aims of specific political interests by urban governance. In this approach, as in the theory of urban fragmentation, the city as a unit is called into question. Based on the literature on urban divisions, I characterised the notion of divided city and specified the position my research takes in these issues. I discussed the main processes leading to urban divisions and characterised their

differences and similarities with other urban dynamics, such as marginalisation. Although the above notions and theoretical frameworks aim at and enable a general discussion of what a divided, segregated, polarised or fragmented city is, such labelling should not blind us from studying each city separately as a unique case. The general framework may be useful to analyse a single case, but a case-study may also be useful to revise or amend the framework. This dual position will be my strategy in the case of Skopje.

## **2 The controlled city**

There is one key dimension which I believe to be missing in the above analysis of divisions in urban space, with the exception of neo-Marxist theories, which I will examine in the following section. The above mentioned researchers studied urban divisions by examining social processes occurring in space. Such perspectives approach space as an instrument in the hands of competing elites. Space is considered to be a platform on which power or policy is exerted, or a material which is shaped. In these traditional views of urban divisions, space is a ‘territory’ ruled by wider political phenomena: fragmented, partitioned or disputed, it is a mere support of social relations. Only rarely has space been considered as an entity or actor in itself, endowed with power.

Space is not only a passive platform: it is also a producer of power. Cities are not the already-made projections of a society which would, as a homogeneous entity, be ‘propelled’ and directly ‘translated’ onto an abstract space. Cities are as much the products of their society as they are a place where power may be created and shaped. For these reasons, urban space and society should be analysed in a dialectical relation. Understanding urban divisions implies a more general focus on the relation between space and power.

Is it conceivable that the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched? Could space be nothing more than the passive locus of social relations, the milieu in which their combination takes on body, or the aggregate of the procedures employed in their removal? The answer must be no. (Lefebvre, 1974:11)

As urban inhabitants, we are so used to the built environment that surrounds us and to its taken-for-granted language that we easily forget that space is not neutral. The play of meaning and the construction of place in the built forms of urban space are neither

arbitrary nor innocent (Dovey, 1999). In urban space, representations intervene, and knowledge and ideology are shaped and used (that is to say, power is exercised and encoded). With the term of ‘occupation’ of space, Le Corbusier (1948) referred to the process in which an agent loses his control of space. He saw this loss as a deprivation of an essential mode of existence. To him, denying an individual his/her power of spatial agency meant robbing away his/her spatial aspect of free will (Le Corbusier, 1948; cf. Findley, 2005). The nexus between the built environment and power may even appear tautological, since place creation is always determined by those in control of resources. Place-making is inherently an elite practice (Dovey, 1999). I will first here focus on the normative and hegemonic power of space, before focusing more precisely on architecture and then on the issue of public space.

## **2.1 Power in space / Power of space**

Foucault addressed the relationship between space and power in the constitution of disciplinarian forces (Foucault, 1984 and 2004). To him, power is normalising rather than repressive, and architecture and planning have been openly conceived by states as a tool to rule, govern, and discipline society in 18th century Western cities, when urban planning became closely tied to the political way about governing society through space. For the first time, planning was seen as an instrument to clean, shape and create a ‘healthy’ population. The governing elites could control and remove potential ‘threats’ – the ‘a-normal’ – from the city. Space became a means to classify, divide, and disperse people rationally through an institutionalisation of social categories – those to include, and those to exclude. I will show that such conceptions of planning arrived later in Skopje than in Western cities.

Foucault (1980:196) coined the concept of *dispositif* to theorise the various mechanisms and knowledge structures of normalisation at work in the production of a disciplinarian space: ‘an ensemble (set) of strategies of relations of force which condition certain types of knowledge and is conditioned by them’. ‘The dispositif has a dominant strategic function’ (1980:195) that ‘ensure[s] a certain allocation of people in space, a *canalization* of their circulation, as well as the coding of their reciprocal relations’ (1984:253). Through zoning and larger planning of the urban space, governments control society. Space, as it exercises ‘a normalizational authority’ (1997:273, cf. Ploger, 2008), is active: it produces an effect over populations. It is both

intentional and ideological. Through it, societal configurations are shaped, and individuals and groups are disciplined and mastered. It is performed power. Yet, it does not command and represses: it suggests and controls, setting norms followed by people and which make them subject to its control. Therefore, we should understand the articulation of space as always embedding relationships of domination. ‘Innocent’, power-free spaces cannot exist (Markus and Cameron, 2002). Tracing back the origins of the term in Foucault’s work, Agamben (2009:14) defines a *dispositif* as ‘anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings’. This reading is similar to that of Deleuze (1992:159) who defines it as ‘tangle, a multilinear ensemble’. In *Mille plateaux*, Deleuze also introduces with Guattari the concept of ‘assemblage’ (*agencement*), conceived as a more fluid and situational approach to systems analysis. Assemblage theory is articulated through a dialectic between de- and re-territorialisation, but it differs from Marxist binary thinking on power balance because of its openness and multiplicity, by stressing ‘that each state contains the traces, remnants, seeds and potential for the alternate state, and need not exist in hostile opposition’ (Legg, 2011:129). These elements are useful to understand power, not as a one-direction, imposed, practice, but as a multidimensional, suggestive and situational reality.

Foucault’s ideas about space and power can be associated with the first aspect of Lefebvre’s (1974) conceptual triad, *l’espace perçu, l’espace conçu, l’espace vécu*: the *perceived space, conceived space, lived space*, also referred to as *spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces*. *Perceived space* is the space produced by society’s spatial practice: it is a *physical space*. *Conceived space* refers to the space of planners and bureaucrats, constructed and conceived through discourse, and contained in plans, designs, and norms that conceptualise, shape and order space: it is a *mental space*. Finally, *lived space* is a space of pure subjectivity, a space associated with a society’s imagination and symbols – a *social space*. *Conceived space* in particular ‘is the dominant space in any society (or mode of production)’ (1974:39), which produces the social and physical spaces experienced, perceived, and imagined by individuals.

Representations of space (*conceived space*) have a practical impact, [...] they intervene in and modify spatial textures which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology. Representations of space [...] have a substantial role and a specific influence in the production of space.’ (1974:42).



Social practices of individuals are shaped and commanded by dominant representations. In this process, space serves as a tool of thought and action for a hegemonic power that ‘makes use of it, in the establishment, on the basis of an underlying logic and with the help of knowledge and technical expertise, of a ‘system.’ (Lefebvre, 1974:11). Shaping space is therefore intimately connected to the ‘forces of the state’ and its ‘ability to produce and secure abstract space through the marginalisation of difference’ (Mc Cann, 1999:178). As I will discuss, these aspects are particularly significant in the case of Skopje.

For Lefebvre, urban space is characterised by hegemonic authority – that of the state and the capital – to exercise power over subjected populations and eliminate all those who do not fit with its normative frame. The modern state promotes and imposes itself as the stable centre of societies and spaces (Lefebvre, 1974). Every society is structured along a centre/periphery relation, in which the centre’s homogeneous space can only be achieved through a process of fragmentation and marginalisation. ‘The dominant form of space, that of the centre of wealth and power, seeks to mould the spaces it dominates (i.e. peripheral spaces), and to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there’ (Lefebvre, 1974:49), usually by expelling ‘all peripheral elements with a violence that is inherent in space itself’ (1976:86). As a result, ‘cities are transformed into a collection of ghettos where individuals are at once ‘socialized’ integrated, submitted to artificial pressures and constraints [...] and separated, isolated, disintegrated’ (1972:168; cf. Mc Cann, 1999:171). Lefebvre refers here to the class-based capitalist city, but I will draw on his ideas on spatial politics to examine Skopje’s multiple facets – the post-Ottoman city, the socialist ‘international’ city and the national capital.

By trying to put an end to contradictions and conflicts, the hegemonic power neutralises whatever resists it by crushing (Lefebvre, 1974). These processes generate centres of power and peripheries of exclusion in cities: ‘The consolidation needs centres; it needs to fix them, to monumentalize them (socially) and specialize them (mentally) (1976:86). The abstract space of planners construct a space from which other histories than the ‘official’ one have been erased, and ‘central to this erasure is the power of the state to reshape the physical spaces of the city’ (Mc Cann, 1999:170). In the end, ‘around the centres, there are nothing but subjugated, exploited and dependent spaces: new colonial spaces’ (Lefebvre, 1978:85). I will discuss these ideas in my thesis

and see in particular if this centre/periphery relation may be a valuable perspective to understand urban divisions in Skopje.

## **2.2 Architecture: a tool for legitimising authority, ideology, identity**

Architecture has a particular role in the process of shaping space in order to exercise and assess power. To Findley (2005:27), it is the 'primary spatial way for people to represent themselves in the world'. Architecture is a visible practice that can also be tied directly to power. As I will show, it takes a particular significance in the case of Skopje. Lefebvre (1974) did not see it as a practice of 'the people', but a self-contained and aloof activity. The architect executes the will of an authority which gives him a piece of land to work on in order to support its 'grounding' in space. The power of architecture is regularly called on by political regimes to legitimise their existence. Authority relies on legitimising symbols in proportion to its vulnerability, and architecture is never used by power more than in time of crisis (Dovey, 1999).

Based on these elements of analysis, I consider the role of architecture as threefold: fixing identity, internalising power relations and producing emotions. First, the built environment is intimately linked with constructing, legitimising, and protecting an identity. This view is particularly developed by Giddens (1990:92) who defines 'the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of actions' as 'ontological security'. Ontological security is similar to the feeling of being 'at home', which is strongly embedded in place as 'a defensive carapace or protective cocoon' (1991:40; cf. Dovey, 1999:48). While societies are constantly 'on the move', the inertia of architecture has the power to 'fix' identities over time.

Second, architecture carries the capacity for ideology and power relations to be internalised. I draw here on Markus (1986) who refers to buildings as 'classifying devices' which reproduce asymmetries of power and hierarchically structured society. The forms and structure of the classification systems they give birth to are socially produced by the purposes, power structures, ideas and beliefs of the society that create them, and hence have a key social role. Dovey (1999) also sees places as symbolising socially constructed identities and differences whose politics are mediated in an arena of spatial representation by architecture. This idea can be seen as an extension of Foucault's and Lefebvre's conceptions of planning.

Third, the power of architecture lies in its capacity to affect people, to ‘touch’ us and bind us to the place we inhabit. In a sense, ‘the greatest instrumental effects of architecture lie in this silence, the power to convince without debate’ (Dovey, 1999:68). To produce emotions on the individual, the built environment must speak the language of the people in order to work. It must be seductive and play with our imagination. Since it aims at designing a future for the society, it must answer its dreams and fight its fears. In my analysis of recent urban politics in Skopje, I will draw on this perspective and see space as not ‘determining’, but rather ‘inviting’ or ‘stimulating’ certain actions by making sense for individuals. Space becomes active and power might be performed only through connections and relations that enable the individual to ‘read’ or rather ‘feel’ the symbols as relevant to their collective schemes of values and discourse references. Otherwise, as Foucault (1984:247) states, ‘the architect has no power on me’.

### 2.3 Public space as a landscape

Based on this discussion, I will now analyse in more detail the notion of public space and show how particular kinds of power in certain situations may invest public space and violate its integrity.

A public space, by definition, is a space created and maintained by a public body, open and accessible to every citizen. In Ancient Greece, this term equated ‘urban space’ with the *agora* being a focal point in the life of the *polis*. The *agora* was not a totally open space, but a specific form of space, used collectively by a very narrow social class which excluded women, slaves and foreigners. The modern understanding of the term can be linked with the one of ‘public sphere’, forged by Habermas<sup>4</sup> (1989:27) to describe the European bourgeois and man-dominated environment of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as ‘the sphere where the private individuals associate themselves in public’. As Mitchell (2003) stresses, contrary to the public sphere, which does not have a spatial or material dimension, public space is material. Because of its openness to public participation, a public space may appear as free of regulation. Yet, since it is first and foremost a *place*, it is subject to many rules of approach, use and control. To Mitchell (2003:51), public space is constantly produced through a ‘dialectic of inclusion

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<sup>4</sup> *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere : An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 27

and exclusion, order and disorder, rationality and irrationality, violent and peaceful disagreement'. Because it is a location where social practices take place, where identities are formed, regulated and presented, it is a place where the 'public' is organised and imagined, i.e. where the public is constructed. It is a highly strategic space for power to be exercised and performed. As will be seen in the following chapters, the issue of public space is central to understand Skopje's current spatial politics.

As developed extensively in the literature (Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009; Mitchell, 2003; Popovski, 2009; Ryfe, 1998; Senett, 1992; Smith and Low, 2006), contemporary urban planning has led to the growth of hybrid spaces. Hybrid spaces are forged by public-private partnerships: business and politics mark space through their common need for order and control over social behaviours. This results in 'dead public spaces' (Sennett, 1992) or 'pseudo-public spaces' (Mitchell, 2003). Space is here shaped in order to facilitate the flow of capital and people and, implicitly, the penetration of a set of norms and ideas about what is 'the public'. Controlled diversity is more profitable – and easier to control – than the promotion of unconstrained social differences (Mitchell, 2003).

Hybridisation of space and the dying of the public space results in a unifying, levelling and homogenising space, increasingly sanitised and securitised, where interactions are highly regulated, uses carefully delimited and 'the public' selected, defined and imaged (Mitchell, 2003). This 'public' is both conceived and rendered passive by planners who, by filtering out any trace of social heterogeneity, foster the illusion of a homogenised public (Crilley, 1993). In Lefebvrian words, *perceived space* – the space of inhabitants and users – are replaced by *conceived space*, which sort and divide social groups 'keeping them separate and prohibiting all contacts – these being replaced by signs (or images) of contacts' (Lefebvre, 1974:375). In dead public spaces, real interaction is replaced by symbolic or virtual interaction. The real place is replaced by a virtual medium, whose reality is of symbolic, rather than material, nature.

This politics of symbolism create an imagined 'public' from which are excluded all those who do not fit with this ideal representation. This banishment of the 'undesirable' is consistent with the planners' aim to turn public space into a stage or a 'theatre in which a pacified public basks in the grandeur of a carefully orchestrated corporate spectacle' (Crilley, 2003:147, cf. Mitchell, 2003:141). In his analysis of the

making of totalitarian urban space in 1930s Fascist Italy, Atkinson accurately described the regime's appropriation of the streets through planning and reconstruction, in order to remove the city's 'pathologies' and create a 'healthy' and fertile ground for the moral geographies of Fascism. Traditional hubs of social life were 'cleansed' of their 'unwanted' elements – i.e. all those who did not match with the ideal of the Fascist city – and redesigned to fit with the public spectacle of the *romanità*. Ordinary Italians were actively included in these rituals of celebration of the regime, through the performance and parades orchestrated in the city streets. Urban space became the stage and arena of the new Fascist 'public' (Atkinson, 1998).

This example shows how public space can be recreated as a landscape. A landscape is a particular way of seeing the world, in which order and control prevail over the confused reality of everyday life. It is a 'scene' where the ruling classes express both their 'possession' and their control over the place and its social interactions (Mitchell, 2003). By removing everything – and everyone – which could threaten its stability as an aesthetic scene, it also implies a 'suspension of disbelief' from the viewer. A space as landscape must be distinguished from a space as stage or theatre. Contrary to a stage it does not display a show, but acts as a mirror or a multitude of pictures.

The power of a landscape does not derive from the fact that it offers itself as spectacle, but rather from the fact that, as mirror and image, it presents any susceptible viewer with an image at once true and false of the creative capacity which the subject (or Ego) is able, during a moment of marvellous self-deception, to claim as his own. A landscape also has the seductive power of all pictures, and this is especially true of an urban landscape... (Lefebvre, 1974:189)

Since it provides the viewer with an illusion of control over his environment, a landscape gives also the illusion of transparency. Creating a landscape can hence be a powerful act in which a seemingly neutral space is filled with meanings and images which put people into determined roles and assigned categories – all under the guise of freedom of movement and thought.

Public spaces are never 'free' spaces. Different kinds of public space can be distinguished and the various degrees of inclusiveness and exclusion can be recognised. Yet, public spaces are places where a certain 'public' is constructed, where some urban residents are selected and other marginalised, where power is performed in order to

control ‘undesirable’ people and activities and proclaim a ‘legitimate’ use of space. To Loukatiou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht (2009), the city’s ‘publicness’ is a limiting, rather than expansive, process, where the implicit definition of legitimate public activities by the legislation and by urban planning is also a way to decide of legitimate public actors. Mitchell (2003) further describes this process of exclusion, when marginalised people and movements can be shut out of public space because of the latter’s ‘Disneyfication’.

In these two sections, I attempted to assess the role space should take in my analysis of urban divisions. Rather than the mere support of social processes, space actively participates in the relations of power that occur on – or *with* and *through* – it. Similarly, power is not an abstract concept: in order to work, it needs to be spatially expressed and located, and it is precisely the materiality of urban space that ensures its existence. I showed here how public space can become a hybrid space, which ultimately leads to a dead public space. Public space shifts from its real materiality to a symbolic reality. It becomes a landscape or medium whose power consists in imposing images of self-representation on individuals. Whereas this section discussed how the power of space can be used by planners and politics and imposed on its inhabitants, I will develop another facet of public space, as a space of contestation. Because it is ‘a natural stage and a powerful medium of communication’ (Lofland<sup>5</sup>, 1998:124, quoted in Amster, 2004:48), it is a venue for inhabitants to challenge top-down decisions, and a forum for opposing groups to make their claims heard (Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009). It is also a site of possibility, plurality, nomadism, chaos, spontaneity, openness, potentiality and ‘progressive politics’ (Massey, 1994). Lees (1998:238) defines public space as torn between the concepts of power and resistance and characterized as ‘simultaneously a space of political struggle and of repression and control’. Because it can materially and metaphorically stand as the essence of pluralism, political participation and personal freedom (Amster, 2004), public space is a deeply *political* space, where the excluded may be represented within ‘the public’ (Mitchell, 2003). Struggles over public space do not only express ideological oppositions, but they are struggles over the *practices* of democracy. These practices of democracy are directly determined by the way public spaces are handled by policy makers (Mitchell, 2003). In this sense, public space is per excellence a place of resistance and transgression, which I

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<sup>5</sup> 1998, *The Public Realm : Exploring the City’s Quintessential Social Territory*, NY: Aldines

will analyse in the next section. It will be also a key dimension by which I analyse spatial politics in contemporary Skopje.

### **3 The lived and contested city**

Many studies have analysed ‘key moments’ in the life of fragmented urban environments. Carnivals and festivals, such as St. Patrick’s Day Celebrations in Belfast (Nagle, 2009), riots, and organised actions of resistance, with the example of the second Intifada in Jerusalem (Klein, 2005), all those events close to the Bakhtinian ‘carnavalesque’ (Taylor, 2007) or Lefebvrian ‘play’ (Lefebvre, 2008) have been analysed in depth. Yet, there has been less work focusing on the daily life in such places. In order to address this, I first review analytical tools for approaching divided cities as an everyday lived environment. Then I focus on the city as a place of resistance to hegemonic powers. I finally examine the individual level and attempt to grasp what it means to *inhabit* the city through the concept of transgression. I will use this analysis in my discussion of Skopje.

#### **3.1 From concrete walls to symbolic borders**

In order to understand how divisions marking urban space affects the life of its inhabitants in a variety of manners, I will first here focus on urban walls and suggest a typology of these material borders in the city. I will then analyse the notion of discontinuity, before examining that of interface and see how both concepts can be useful to understand urban divisions and their consequences on the city as a lived environment.

Walls are often thought as a major expression of division. The construction of a wall is never a fortuitous or innocent act. It results from a specific social action of physically marking and formalising a spatial discontinuity: the *limit* (Chapelon, 2008). It implies a choice, which can be methodological, political or strategic, as well as individual or collective. A social construct, the wall has a subjective dimension. The emotional and psychological impact of a wall may differ among individuals and lead to tensions between groups. Analysing the former boundary line of Beirut, Ababsa (2002) notes that the persistence of such a demarcation results less from its physical existence

than from the representations the inhabitants attach to it. To the wall, as support of individual representations, I would add the state control mechanisms, with the presence of checkpoints and identity regulations which include/exclude given populations. As the wall is a bearer of individual imaginary, the checkpoints may affect the individual psyche. At the checkpoint, an individual may have to reveal his identity, thus becoming socially transparent or naked. Because the checkpoint is represented by the people who guard it, the psychological action of the checkpoint might even be stronger than the wall.

There is a link between the construction of a border and identity-building: 'boundaries between 'us' and 'others are critical elements in establishing 'us' and excluding 'others'' (Passi, 1999:75). State power and the institutional and symbolical aspects of borders are connected. Identities can be institutionalised by a border that excludes the 'other' from a territory decided by the state. Building a wall expresses physical and normative power relations (Passi, 1999). The *geometrisation*, the act of drawing a limit – for instance, an urban wall – may also create new discontinuities (Chapelon, 2008). New administrative borders produce new spatial discontinuities, whether economic, social or cultural. The creation of the Berlin wall in 1961 brought considerable discrepancies between West and East Berlin – a gap that can still be felt long after its removal.

Urban territories are affected by different types of limits, which can be materialized or not by the construction of physical demarcations. Cities, such as Nicosia, Belfast or Jerusalem, contain barriers that divide and enclose different areas and their inhabitants. Other cities, such as Mostar or Sarajevo, may contain more symbolic borders but which nonetheless affect the practices and representations of their residents. To characterise such non-material barriers, Klein (2005:60) refers to 'walls of consciousness'. I will show here that urban borders can take different forms and have a plurality of meanings.

Marcuse (1995) establishes a functional typology of barriers, which I will use in the case of Skopje. *Prison walls* define and preserve enclaves or ghettos, and may be physical, social or economic limits established to ensure the preservation of a group's identity through isolation and segregation. *Barricade walls* aim at protecting a community's cohesiveness and solidarity, not through physical means, but through



symbols and expressions of community identity – in particular, national flags, or street signs written in the group's language. *Walls of aggression* express domination and power, exemplified in fences or police patrols. *Sheltering walls* serve to exclusively protect the privileges of its residents, while also selecting and controlling membership to the community. *Castle walls of domination*, which express economic, social or political superiority, are found in institutional or political offices and buildings. To Marcuse, prison and barricade walls are protective; walls of aggression serve to impress those outside them; sheltering walls are exclusive and act as a checkpoint that helps control and filter between two different sides; finally, castle walls seek to dominate by combining components of the four other models.

This typology describes ideal models, with most cities actually containing several components of each type (Klein, 2005). It can be criticised for being too static and for not taking into account the dynamisms of internal borders. The latter may indeed follow the practices of urban inhabitants. The non-categoricity of borders calls for a study of the 'fuzziness' of specific practices and representations attached to them, along with the interactions that take place along the walls. By fuzziness, I mean that a real case may be characterised by practices and representations which are attributed to distinct kinds of borders of the above typology. In what follows I oppose to the linear understanding of urban division (when divisions are reduced to a wall) an understanding which attributes it a certain 'thickness' (when there is a buffer-zone). I will show how this dimension appears in particular in the notions of discontinuity and interface.

A *discontinuity* refers to a rupture, a separation, a 'leap' or change in a spatial system (Brunet, 1967; Gay, 1995). It implies a contact between the entities it separates: this can be direct, in the case of a physical contiguity, or indirect, as in a reticular (network) system (Chapelon, 2008). In an urban environment, this means a connection between divided systems or areas. In the case of a linear and non-reticular structure, there is a discontinuity when a variation of identified common or stable features – either quantitative or qualitative – can be observed. According to Grasland (1998, cf. Chapelon, 2008), the idea of discontinuity can be based on a continuous understanding involving a threshold. We talk about discontinuity when it is possible to distinguish between two kinds of territories whose differences enable to characterize each of them. The notion of discontinuity does not only refer to a linear, sudden and absolute rupture,

but it may be marked by a gradual differentiation. In cities, discontinuity might be illustrated by the presence of a buffer-zone separating two areas.

A discontinuity may result from two different processes (which can combine). First, it may be the result of an open process – as in the political division of an entity (Berlin). Second, it may also refer to less explicit dynamics linked with the representations or perceptions attached to the separation – as in the case of a discontinuity resulting from the urban practices of different populations. Here, it might be either a conscious or unconscious variation, which can be used, claimed and manipulated by the inhabitants and policy-makers. Bollens (2006) analyses the way the buffer-zone of Mostar, which separates Croats and Bosniaks, is at the centre of wider group strategies of exclusive appropriation of the urban territory. This is also the case of the city centre in Belfast (Nagle, 2009a and 2009b) where the buffer-zone takes on a particular meaning for divided groups.

Finally, Chapelon (2008) reminds us of the importance of examining discontinuities at different scales. Depending on the chosen level, the separation may be materialized by a spot, a line or an area. Therefore the dimension of the discontinuity depends on the level of analysis. Yet a discontinuity should not be seen as static but as a dynamic reality, that can evolve, be reinforced, or even disappear. A spot-discontinuity can transform into a line discontinuity, which can transform into an area-discontinuity.

The line or area of contact between two different entities is an *interface*. The key notion here is that of one of *contact*. More generally, the *interface* is ‘a geographical object that arises from discontinuity and/or is established on the latter. It carries out a function of connection between different territorial systems and has a privileged role of regulation [...] it is a place in which complementarities are expressed, but also differences or tensions between different modes of regulation’ (Chapelon, 2008:197). Therefore, an interface is a specific system that brings into contact two different entities. The analysis of interfaces implies a focus on the interactions resulting from the convergence of two systems in a spatial area. Wilson and Donnan’s (1998:9) conception of borders include this dimension of an interface:

[b]orders have three elements: the legal borderline which simultaneously separates and joins states; the physical structures of the state which exist to demarcate and protect the borderline, composed of people and institutions

which often penetrate deeply into the territory of the state; and frontiers, territorial zones of varying width which stretch across and away from borders, within which people negotiate a variety of behaviours and meanings associated with their membership in nations and states.

As a system based on the exchanges made between the territories it connects as its own entrances and exits, an interface may impact on its environment, according to its function and degree of closure and openness. As such, it produces space (Chapelon, 2008). In the urban arena, this concept leads to focus, not only on the static limits that separate groups or areas, but on the dynamics of group relations.

Wilson and Donnan (1998) show that, due to their liminal and often contested nature, borders are frequently characterised by shifting and multiple identities – this being true not only for ethnic identity, but also for class, gender and sexuality. When borders are drawn with few references to cultural or blood ties, populations are forced to evolve a *modus vivendi* which incorporates contradictory identities. Such negotiations support and subvert the traditional perception of borders as political and legal constructions imposed by the top. Moreover, borders may act both as barriers and opportunities. Seys (2002) refers to the ‘border-effect’ to argue that the borderline is less important than what it induces for the areas it both separates and connects. Benafla (2002) shows that, as a mediating entity, the ‘border-effect’ defines the properties and the very existence of the limit, through the differential, asymmetrical relations, competitions and exchanges it produces. To Chapelon (2008), the presence of discontinuities results in the development of interfaces, since they stem from the multidimensional strategies of valorisation of the differences between systems by the inhabitants.

While the interface generates inequalities between the entities it connects (Reitel *et al.*, 2002), it may also result in a more subtle hierarchisation of territories inside these areas, between those which directly access the interface and are placed in its influential dynamic and the others (Chapelon, 2008). A particular attention should be paid to places at the peripheries of each system, but which may have strategic roles for their functioning. Such places of connection are usually much richer and more varied than the systems they separate. They are the places of a considerably higher economic, social, ethnic and cultural heterogeneity than the wider territories they are part of (Chapelon,

2008). This explains why interfaces are a central stake for societies, particularly in urban planning and management.

As a dynamic system, interfaces might have different functions depending on the level of differential between the territories they connect. In formally partitioned cities, this differential has been attenuated (for instance, with the fall of the Berlin wall) with the disappearance of the wall. Yet, the disappearance of the wall does not necessarily imply the disappearance of the interface. As shown by Ababsa (2002) in the case of Beirut, it is not because the physical barrier has been lifted that its effects cannot be felt. There is a memory of the demarcation line which still generates a differential between the formerly separated areas. This is the case of Berlin. Although the city is now officially reunited, there are still some differences among East and West Berlin. Those might have lessened with time and made the interface less powerful, but as long as they exist, the interface will remain, even if more 'passive'. I will insist on the symbolic aspect of urban borders. As seen in Berlin or Beirut, an interface is much more than an objective and formal limit. As a daily place of interaction between individuals, it can tell us a lot about the discrepancies between practices and perceptions.

From the above review, I derive the three following normative requirements for an analysis of urban division. First, spatial differentiations should not be conceived statically, but as a dynamic process. Second, urban walls should not be reduced to a linear or absolute understanding. They have a spatial 'thickness' which cannot be quantitatively measured. What is important is their subjective impact more than their physicality and 'objectivity'. This is why I will focus on the representations attached to urban limits, as well as on the discourses and practices they both affect and are affected by. Third, instead of focusing on the separated entities, the analysis should evaluate their contact zones and spaces of interaction, i.e. their interfaces.

In the same ways as researchers focus on 'key moments' in the life of urban communities, they often concentrate on 'key places' in these divided cities. Yet, subversion may occur at any place in the city. This constitutes a limit of the traditional approaches to urban divisions. Focusing on places of divisions may be blind to processes which happen outside the realm of places taken into consideration. So while analysing walls and interfaces will be central to my research, I will also follow a more anthropological approach by analysing the city as someone who lives in it – an *inhabitant*.

### 3.2 Contesting power in urban space

As I will argue in my thesis, recent urban policies in Skopje do not enjoy the complete support of all city-dwellers. Resistance to state and local planning strategy is central to the on-going struggle over public space in the Macedonian capital. Yet, how should *resistance* be defined? What distinguishes an act of resistance from a mere transgression is the intentionality of the perpetrator. Many activities may *a posteriori* be constructed as resistance, sometimes in a romanticised fashion, but not all of them actually are (Creswell, 1996). I define an act of resistance as a purposeful action, directed against someone or something, with the intention of altering or lessening its effect. The outcome may be successful or not: it is not that important – what matters is the eagerness of the resistor.

#### 3.2.1 *Escaping the power of space*

Here, I analyse how the necessary appropriation of space opens the possibility of contesting hegemonic representations. I link this to the differentiation of public space into an imposed/contested space of politics/activists.

Lefebvre (1968) introduced the concept of the ‘right to the city’ as a ‘demand [for] a transformed and renewed access to urban life’ (Lefebvre, 1996:158) to stress the need to restructure power relations in urban space and alter the locus of control from hegemonic power towards the city’s inhabitants. According to him, *conceived space* supposes a tacit agreement, a contract, and a convention that impose reciprocity and communality. Urban spaces are increasingly produced *for* us rather than *by* us. Urban inhabitants should have the right to creatively participate in the city.

The right to the city manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualisation in socialisation, to habitat and to inhabit. The right to the *oeuvre*, to participation and *appropriation* (clearly distinct from the right to property), are implied in the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996: 174).

*Conceived space* must ‘mean’ something to interact with and be appropriated by *lived space* – the space ‘experienced through the complex symbols and images of its “inhabitants” and “users”.’ (1974:33). Here lie the weaknesses of the space of planners

and the potential fissures to the establishment of a hegemonic power in urban space. The need for *conceived space* to be appropriated also opens the possibility of appropriation which goes against the purpose it was conceived for. A process of 'reappropriation' may oppose to power and result ultimately in the construction of another space (Lefebvre, 1974).

The right to the city is never guaranteed and never freely given: to win the right to representation as part of 'the public', excluded groups have to transform public space into spaces *for* representation, and often in a 'violent' way (Mitchell, 2003). Lefebvre (1974:23) points out that 'the rationality of state, its techniques, plans, and programmes provoke opposition' – an opposition which is 'still capable of rattling the lid of the cauldron of the state and its space, for differences can never be totally quieted'. Space is constantly occupied, reused, and 'reappropriated' by groups that seek to challenge dominant representations of space. It is 'negotiated' or 'disputed' (Agier, 1999:4). Lefebvre's (1974:39) conceptual triad results in 'oppositions, contrasts, antagonisms'. Power and counter-powers are exerted in space: 'differences have never said their last word. Defeated, they live' (Lefebvre, 1974:39). Contestation of space can take place in subspaces. Lefebvre (1974:382) referred to 'marginal space' as one identified by 'marginal outgroups' for investing alternative values to the hegemonic ones. These are places of resistance to dominant public space by groups that seek to *take* place and create their own *lived space*, fighting against 'specialized space and a narrow localization of function'. The right to the city depends upon the need to produce public space, which itself relies on the need to actively *take* it.

To most scholars, the public/private distinction is crucial to understanding familial, political and economic relations. Yet, few agreed on how to characterise this dichotomy and define public space. Lofland (1998:454) defines the public realm 'as those nonprivate sectors or areas of urban settlements in which individuals in co-presence tend to be personally unknown or only categorically known to one another'. Analysing socialist history, Gal and Kligman (2000) propose seeing the public/private distinction as shifting and relative to the interactional situation in which it is applied. To Mitchell (2003), cities are characterised by two very different conceptions of public space: that of political actors and that of 'activists'.

In the first, public space is opposed to private. It is a controlled space first

defined by its usage (recreation, entertainment, consumption...) and by an *appropriate* public. In the second case, public space is unconstrained, left to its user's determination. It tolerates the risk of disorder as central to its functioning. This dichotomy is close to Lefebvre's distinction between *conceived space* and *perceived space*. In *conceived space*, only the appropriate public is invited. The fact that this public is an effect of categorisation also renders the individuals anonymous to each other. In *perceived space*, the users determine space. Yet, while public spaces are caught in this dialectic between *conceived space* and *perceived space*, they are also *lived space*, i.e. a place where alternative movements express themselves and can be *seen* and *heard*. The right to the city is therefore a *cry* and public space is where this cry is heard – only then can this demand become 'public' and outgroups represent themselves as part of a 'legitimate' public. Therefore, while public spaces are a place where power is imposed, they are also the very sites where this power can be challenged.

In his reading of Lefebvre, Nagle (2009b) depicts marginal spaces as hybrid: sites of passage situated 'in between' and in which individuals challenge fixity of imposed identities through alternative lifestyles and new forms of symbolic ordering. To Lofland (1998:455-456) a 'parochial space' is a space that, despite being 'ostensibly public areas of a city [...] may not be part of the public realm at all'. Definitions of what is public or not are not necessarily shared: 'what is considered private, parochial or public space; whether a particular space is exclusive or inclusive; and whether what is, should be, may all be matters of conflict and/or negotiation' (Lofland, 1998:456).

Marginalisation takes its roots in the contradiction between the project of the state to create homogenous space and its realisation which can only foster difference and fragmentation. It is the very contradictions inherent to the state-sponsored space that provide the opportunity for oppositional groups to take part in the production of social space through their daily practices (Mc Cann, 1999). Cities are marked by violent struggles between the dominant power and subaltern groups: between the central authority's ideological and normative space and the marginalized elements' 'counter-spaces' (Lefebvre, 1974:381). 'Investing space, producing space, is not a hitch, but a matter of life or death' (*ibid.*:478): the struggle for power is vital.

### 3.2.2 *Urban social movements*

Social movements must, and do, occupy and reconfigure material public spaces in the city. Indeed, these movements are premised on the notion that democratic (and certainly revolutionary) politics are impossible without the simultaneous creation and control of *material space* (Mitchell, 1995:123).

I will here analyse the form usually taken by urban social movements and show how their level of action calls for a local scale analysis.

Urban social movements have recently emerged as a new political actor in Macedonian spatial politics. A (urban) ‘social movement’ refers to groups who take the streets to express their demands or claim some rights. The term ‘social movement’ is commonly used by scholars to refer to a variety of different cases. It can designate large phenomena, such as Solidarnosc in Poland, or smaller and local grassroot organisations which adopt ‘confrontational and disruptive tactics – occupying buildings, boycotting businesses, and blockading streets’ (Zirakzadeh, 2006:3). According to Tilly (2004), the size of a group and its goals should not be a criterion of definition. A social movement is a ‘distinctive way of pursuing public politics’ united around three kinds of claims: ‘program, identity, and standing’. Its functioning is based on ‘interactive campaigns’ of ‘collective claims’, a set of ‘claim-making performances’ such as public meetings, protests and media statements, and ‘public representations of the cause’s worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment’ (Tilly, 2004:7-12). The term of urban social movement was originally applied by Castells (1983: xvi), who defines it as ‘collective actions consciously aimed at the transformation of the social interests and values embedded in the forms and functions of a historically given city’. More precisely, an urban social movement is a kind of social movement whose claims revolve around three ideas:

‘1) Demands focused on *collective consumption*, that is, goods and services directly or indirectly provided by the state. 2) Defense of *cultural identity* associated with and organized around a specific *territory*. 3) Political mobilization in relationship to the state, particularly emphasizing the role of *local government*.’ (Castells: xviii)

What distinguishes an urban from a regular social movement is its local anchorage. Whereas traditional movements present universal claims – such as minorities’ rights or environmental issues – urban movements adopt a ‘particularistic discourse, whose primary goal is to make a visible impact at the local level as a prelude to broader,



structural change' (Vangeli, 2011:6). This local presence does not go against universalistic goals: 'urban movements are more and more recognised as very modern indeed in terms of how they articulate locality and what lies beyond' (Hamel *et al.*, 2000:1). In their attempt to defend the public space of their city, urban activists may 'protect the home environment – against too much traffic, too much development, or any other project which people don't like to have "in their own backyard"' (Mayer, 2000:143). Those are often articulated with 'extra-local' space (Hamel *et al.*, 2000).

The local anchorage of urban movements suggests that the analysis of such movements should be local. This brings us back to the idea, so dear to Castells (1983: xvi), that 'only by analysing the relationship between people and urbanisation we will be able to understand cities and citizens at the same time. Such a relationship is most evident when people mobilise to change the city in order to change society'. I will pay special attention to this relationship in my analysis of Skopje's opposition to the current renovation of the city centre.

The use of the street as urban movements' main platform of resistance raises the question of centrality of *physical space* in their acts of resistance. I will here analyse the essential role of the street for urban movements, and, in particular, the notion of *visibility*.

Social media are often key places for people to share their values, spread the word and get organised. Yet, they are usually an instrument rather than an end in itself: 'there has never been a revolution conducted solely in cyberspace' (Mitchell, 2003:149). This is why taking to the street is vital for political and traditional media outcasts to express their claims and to exist. Marginalised groups do not have an equal access to material means of participation (Mitchell, 2003), and by this the analysis of public space through social media will only depict what is visible in these media.

Urban public spaces have a long history of identity and community building. Loukatiou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht (2009) analyse how streets and sidewalks have always been used by groups to capture public attention and be counted as legitimate members of the polity – for example, with parades. A parade is 'a linear procession of an orderly crowd moving with a sense of direction, purpose, and ceremonial significance, providing the means for social identities to be crafted and displayed in public' (Brown-May, 1998; cf. Loukatiou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009:62). This

definition focuses on the making of collective identity in and through a temporary event in public space. Lefebvre underlined the need for marginalised groups to ‘reappropriate’ their rights by constructing another space: parades may be ways of performing or ‘enacting’ an identity by appropriating the street. As mentioned before, this action is not the privilege of minority groups: it is also a major way in which elite identity is displayed and power performed. As in state-organised rallies, a parade is a spectacle of a group imaginary (Stychin, 1998; cf. Loukatiou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009) which may be equated as a territorial and identity act, even if only temporary.

By choosing to participate in the procession with others, the individual becomes a *de facto* member of a ‘community’. Through a linear procession along the street, the community presents itself to society as a whole (Davis 1995). Parades bring ‘a performative, spatial component to cultural identities—particularly those of ethnic and racial minorities—by way of their routes through the urban landscape’ (O’Reilly and Crutcher 2006<sup>6</sup>, 249). (Loukatiou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009:63)

The performance on public space brings unity to a movement otherwise under the risk of ‘balkanisation’ (Mitchell, 2003). It is an inclusive ritual which ties the participants through a sense of belonging to a common entity. The ordinary functions of urban public space is transcended when people ‘take to the streets’: it becomes a place for community to be defined and be acknowledged by others. As I will argue, this dimension is particularly important in the case of Skopje.

The presence of the ‘Other’ is crucial to this momentum – in a rather ambiguous way. While Lefebvre speaks of *lived space* to refer to the places invested by alternative groups, Mitchell (2003) rather talked of spaces *for* representation – spaces in which participants *can* represent themselves. It is precisely in and through public space that marginalised individuals and groups [can make themselves seen and display their identity to an audience. Representation ‘demands’ and creates space:

what makes a space *public* – a space in which the cry and the demand for the right to the city can be seen and heard – is often not its preordained ‘publicness’. Rather, it is when, to fulfil a pressing need, some group or another *takes* space and through its actions *makes* it public. The very act of representing one’s group (or to some extent one’s self) to a larger public

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Parallel Politics : the Spatial Power of New Orleans’ Labor Day Parades’, *Social and Cultural Geography*, 7(2): 245-265

creates a space for representation. Representation both demands space and creates space. (Mitchell, 2003:35)

Groups use streets and squares to make themselves visible: a parade is a temporary moment which deviates from the ordinary life of the street and invites passers-by to stop, watch and even interact (Loukatiou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009). Such events allow outgroups to propose an alternative identity and sense of belonging to the one imposed on them. It enables them to be seen and heard as a distinct entity which attempts to subvert a dominant order and, as Lefebvre would say, *produce* a new kind of public space. A parade is also a means for alternative groups to demand acceptance of their presence and their difference in the broader society, and assert their equal right to belonging to a larger community which they share with their audience. This twofold identity claim – claiming the right to be different at the same time as the right to be the same – makes the space they create ambiguous. On the one hand, it is meant to be an inclusive space, a truly *public* space which should replace a pseudo-public space. On the other hand, it is also an exclusive space, momentarily belonging to the people who take to the street, appropriate it and territorialise their identity, and thus voluntarily produce an *alternative* space.

The space of resistance functions differently than the space imposed by a hegemonic power. New alternative spaces are never fixed, they are only momentary. Since they are not planned from the top but they are the product of a ‘moment’, they never truly belong to the marginalised group. They are the object of a rivalry, a site of tensions between a dominant order and an undesirable disruption. Therefore, public spaces are ‘chaotic’, sites in constant evolution, ‘hybrid’, not *per se*, as Nagle (2009) suggested, but temporarily ‘in-between’. For this reason, ‘the production of public space – the means through which the cry and demand of the right to the city is made possible – is thus always a dialectic between the “end of public space” and its beginning’ (Mitchell, 2003:35-36).

Marginal outgroups are not the only groups with the capacity of resistance: urban inhabitants also have this capacity. It is problematic to focus only on issues of power and view cities exclusively as sites of domination and resistance, as it excludes a majority of city-dwellers who are not part of urban elites nor are involved in open resistance, but who, in their daily practices, *make* the city. A city is indeed made of the

spatial practices, perceptions and routines of its inhabitants – as many individual acts which ‘secrete’ their own environment and appropriate urban space. While urban elites try to design and control public space, individuals may use, divert and twist it in a way that can oppose this hegemonic power, with or without intentionality. Having analysed the processes by which power is expressed in space, either as imposed on or claimed by individuals, I will now focus on the city as a place of transgression.

### **3.3 In Place / Out of Place: from Property to Transgression**

Hegemonic powers are not always opposed in a direct and visible manner. They may be challenged by minuscule and sometimes unintentional activities: transgression. Although apparently insignificant, actions of subversion may nonetheless be efficient to contest hegemonic dominant representations and, as I will show, such initiatives are quite important in Skopje. In this section, I argue that these unintentional and ephemeral initiatives are a powerful enactment of the right for the individuals to inhabit the city. I first analyse how places impose a certain ‘proper’ behaviour. This ‘properness – the *doxa* – reveals as *orthodoxy* when it is violated by ‘non-proper’ behaviour. I then analyse the role of such violations. To intentional violations – resistance – I oppose transgressions, and to planned intentional violations – strategies – I oppose tactics. I consider how, through transgressions and tactics, inhabitants claim their right to the city.

Every social place supposes a convention in order to work. Phrases such as ‘know your place’ or ‘to put someone at one’s place’ do not only refer to a spatial reference: they imply a sense of what is ‘proper’ or not to do (Cresswell, 1996). Despite its alleged ‘naturalness’, there is nothing logical or necessary in the idea of *propriety*: there are only *expectations* about behaviours perceived as right, just and appropriate in space. De Certeau’s (1980) analysis of the neighbourhood pointed at this adhesion to a system of values which forces each dweller to play a certain role – and hence, constantly wear a mask in public. The practice appropriate to a place implies a tacit adhesion to a contract which controls the distribution of behaviours and appearances of those who frequent this place. This analysis is close to that of Goffman (1959) who compared social interactions as a theatrical performance, where the individuals are actors watched by an audience at the same time as they are an audience for the viewers’ play.

The social contract is not imposed from above but often results from social interactions. It is above all negative. Propriety acts as a law which imposes certain rules of conduct on individuals and it does so by shedding light on what is not tolerable. De Certeau (1980) refers to ‘minuscule repressions’ to analyse how the tacit rules of a place operate by filtering and exposing what deviates from what is supposed to be the ‘correct way’ of a place. Space is never ‘free’: it is social – the place of the other – and subjected to an internal regulation of practices. De Certeau (1980) defines propriety as a ‘rite’ imposed on the inhabitant in their exchanges with other inhabitants. It provides the former with the signs of its own recognition. It requires avoiding any deviation – i.e. any ‘dissonance’ or ‘noise’ – that would disrupt the play of behaviours upon which a place rests. A drunk man is seen as ‘inappropriate’ in public places, where his behaviour is a disruption of the codes of the place.

The set of rules fluctuate a lot depending on the place and time of the day. It is both contextual and conjectural: a mini-skirt is an appropriate item of clothing for a woman in a dancing club, yet totally out-of-place in a church. A social place is a scene where characters should be identified at first glance in the role assigned by propriety. De Certeau (1980) referred to ‘masks’ dwellers have to wear, which allow public recognition anywhere. Places follow implicit codes of propriety which lead people to formulate expectations about others. The individual is an immediate social being and everyday life is his/her most powerful legitimisation. Anyone who does not respect the rules of propriety of the place is seen as a ‘stranger’ – someone ‘out of place’.

When ‘noise’ disturbs – intentionally or not – the expectations of a place, it questions the normative landscape of this place. The margins are here to tell us something about ‘normality’ (Creswell, 1996). It is only when something seems ‘wrong’ that light is shed on the ‘natural’ relation between behaviour and place. The moment of the transgression marks the shift from the unspoken and unquestioned power of place over the taken-for-granted behaviour to an official orthodoxy concerning what is proper or not. It is precisely when the ‘naturalness’ of place is questioned that the *doxa* is suddenly brought to light and becomes *orthodoxy* (Creswell, 1996) – or *orthopraxy*.

Our presence in a place is always active. We *actively* take part in the ideological construction of a place through our practice. When we remove our hat or make sure that our shoulders are covered before we enter a church, our practice is directly informed by

the meaning of the place. Our gestures are influenced by our interpretation of the meaning of the church, but they also reinforce this meaning by adhering to them, even if this seems natural. Places are active forces in the reproduction of norms (Creswell, 1996). Practices are a form of *consumption* – when someone acts following certain norms, he ‘buys’ into them – and of *production* – his actions contribute to the continuation of unquestioned meanings attached to places.

In order to work, the rules of a place must seem ‘natural’. Bourdieu (1979) underlines the importance of the common sense as a mechanism of domination: to be successful, a power must make its system seem to be the ‘natural world’. The taken-for-grantedness of a place enables the adherence to the established order: the social world appears as the natural world (Creswell, 1996). It is precisely this *doxic* experience that is challenged when a ‘dissonance’ occurs. Where power was successful in ‘naturalising’ its system and in hiding the construction behind it, deviance ‘denaturalises’ or ‘demystifies’ this system, by suggesting alternatives. What was unquestioned suddenly becomes questioned. This awareness has the effect of turning the doxa into an order which is no more ‘natural’ but which can be questioned, subverted and even resisted:

Only in and through struggle do the internalised limits become boundaries, barriers that have to be moved. And indeed, the system of classificatory schemes is constituted as an objectified, institutionalised system of classification only when it has ceased to function as a sense of limits so that the guardians of the established order must enunciate, systematise and codify the principles of production of that order, both real and represented, so as to defend them against heresy; in short, they must constitute the doxa as orthodoxy. (Bourdieu, 1979:480)

Acting in space is like reading a book: the text is never straight but it can inspire multiple readings. These new readings bring new ideas about what was first considered ‘normal’. As readers, we act in space and our practice forms new meanings – alternative readings which may challenge the dominant one. We are no more only consumers, but active producers of space.

The term ‘outsider’ is commonly used to designate an individual new to a place or unaware of its customs. Because they are considered ‘outside’, that is ‘out of place’, such people are usually suspected of being troublemakers. While an individual or an action may be judged ‘inappropriate’ by other people, it does not imply that it was meant to be so. This is the difference between *resistance* and *transgression*.

Earlier, I argued that *resistance* implies an intention: it is a purposeful action directed against someone or something, with the goal to affect it or modify its effect. Because of the intentionality of resistance, the analysis of resistance should focus on the intentions rather than on the consequences of actions. What matters is not that the action was successful or not, but its intended aim (Cresswell, 1996). *Transgression*, on the other hand, does not presuppose an intention, but a certain result. There is transgression because someone notices it. Such a practice may have been intentional. By this, resistance and transgression are not exclusive concepts: some cases of resistance may be interpreted as transgression, while acts of transgression may have been intended or have the potential to turn into resistance. Yet, the two concepts do not have the same status. While an act or the intention of an act is perceived as ‘resistance’ *from the inside*, by the person who perpetuates or conceives it, ‘transgression’ is perceived *from the outside*, by those who witness the action. An action is a ‘transgression’ for the people who react to it.

Defining something as ‘transgressive’, or simply ‘deviant’ or ‘abnormal’, is related to power. The one who has the power to define the norms has the power to label everything which does not respect these norms as deviant. Power is the ability to make rules for others (Cresswell, 1996). Deviation threatens an established order because of its capacity to fracture the assumed ‘normality’ of this order and reveal that an alternative is possible.

Transgression is not specific to ‘revolutionaries’ – people who want to overthrow an established order – and it is limited neither to certain people nor to certain times. Transgression is multiple and pervasive, and its most common and probably most effective occurrences are found in everyday life. De Certeau and Giard (1980) characterised transgression as ‘multiform’, ‘tricky’ and ‘stubborn’. Individual practices are like microbe operations proliferating within the system’s structures. They allow the users to reappropriate space and recreate their own ways of living. According to de Certeau (1980), this process is precisely the one through which individuals subvert the rules established by a dominant order. The potential for transgression lies in the gap between what is produced and imposed by power and its *use* by the individuals. This appropriation or ‘recreation’ enables them to subvert the rules from within, not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them differently than planned by their designers. The individuals may hence escape the system without leaving it and, through their daily ruses, compose the network of an antidiscipline.

De Certeau refers to these creative and innumerable practices as *tactics*. *Tactics* differ from *strategies*. A *strategy* is a calculus of force and relations rationally conceived by a subject of will and power and which have a spatial or institutional localisation. A *tactic*, on the other hand, disrupts or subverts a dominant order by being transient, unpredictable and often irrational. It does not have its own place: it is a 'moment', an opportunity that must be seized 'on the wing': 'whatever it wins, it doesn't keep' (Certeau, 1980: xix). It is, per essence, the instrument of the weak, since it must play on a terrain imposed by an outside power. Rather than planning a general strategy, it can only operate in isolated actions, depending on time and taking advantage of what it offers. A tactic does not have a place or a view on the whole: it is highly mobile and malleable.

Tactics are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time – to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favourable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organisation of a space, to the relations among successive moments in an action, to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms, etc. [...] Strategies pin their hopes on the resistance that the *establishment of a place* offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever *utilisation of time*, of the opportunities it presents et also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power... the two ways of acting can be distinguished according to whether they bet on place or on time. (de Certeau, 1980:38-39)

Because of their flexibility and ephemeral nature, tactics are as difficult to control as they are to observe. Yet, they sometimes leave visible traces on space, from graffiti to house decorations. We find them in everyday activities, such as walking, speaking, moving through space, interacting with others: many actions in which 'everyday life invents itself by *poaching* in countless ways on the property of others' (de Certeau, 1980, xii). They are innumerable tricks and ways of playing with the other's game, combinations of manipulation and enjoyment, ways of subverting the system from within – sometimes right under the nose of those in power. As Mitchell and Kelly (2010: 27) wrote,

these tactics need not be deliberate attempts to attack images or institutions of power (although in cases such as rioting or the 'carnavalesque'). Rather, the manner in which local residents use the spaces created and altered by these strategies reflect myriad degrees and forms of resistance, as well as the constant re-definition of space.



In a space determined by planned representations, tactics are a way to refuse the fatality and create another meaning, another system built upon its user's alternative creations: different 'worlds' to the official ones – seemingly harmless yet essential ways for the inhabitants to assert their right to the city.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, we should keep two things in mind. First, as argued by Foucault (1984), power is never directly 'imposed' in and through space: it invites individuals to behave in a certain way. Space is interpreted by its users: people have always the choice to use it in a different way than initially planned by its conceivers. Second, it is only through *praxis* that this interpretation can exist. This is the reason why the effect of space cannot be anticipated: the way it is apprehended is specific to its users and it always fluctuates with time and with their actions and behaviours. No matter how powerful urban elites may be, there is always a possibility to escape 'their' space. Before I proceed to my case-study, I will briefly sum up how I position my research with respect to the reviewed literature.

First, I combine in my own thesis the results of both the studies of urban divisions and those of divided cities. From the literature on divided cities, I borrow many elements of analysis. While valuable, the concept of divided city contains a potential pitfall: its emphasis on ethnicity or religions as the main divisive elements in urban space. In order not to be trapped by the ethnic prism, I will analyse urban divisions on different levels and dimensions. This is where my analysis of *segregation*, *polarisation* and *fragmentation* comes in. Second, I identify the use of static concepts as carrying a risk of essentialising urban divisions. By examining the statics and dynamics of divisions, I will analyse urban divisions as a dynamic process, with internal contradictions and unexpected components. Third, issues of urban management and planning receive extensive treatment in the literature, but the role urban elites may have in the construction of the image of the divided city has been investigated to a lesser extent. In my thesis, I will question the role and impact of the *image* of the divided city and its application to urban space. This leads me to my final point. The issue of urban management is crucial in understanding urban divisions, but the analysis should not stop at the top-down level. This is why I also invoke theories of power and public space to

understand urban divisions. This approach allows me to apprehend cities in their variety and complexity, without being locked into the convenient tag of the divided city.

## – CHAPTER 2 –

# METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I outline the research methodology I used in my thesis. I present how it guided data gathering and analysis, and the development of research theory. Section one discusses the approaches followed by social scientists researching on urban divisions, and introduces the fundamental guidelines followed by this study. Section two presents my research planning and data collection in Skopje, based on three distinct aspects and methodological approaches. Section three reflects on positionality and ethical considerations. The final section describes the data management procedures and analysis of the study findings.

### 1 Conceptual design

As seen in the previous chapter, an extensive literature has examined urban divisions and ‘divided cities’. Social scientists have often resorted to quantitative research and statistical descriptions of segregation to map out social or ethnic inequalities in urban space (Sassen, 1991; Adair *et al.*, 2000; Beall *et al.*, 2002; Murtagh, 2003; Bollens, 2006; Le Goff, 2006; Murtagh *et al.*, 2008). As underlined by Brun (1994), quantitative instruments provide a useful support for studies of the spatial forms of segregation. They are useful, for instance, to locate urban borders and their evolutions, or to draw comparisons and assess levels or degrees of segregation between different urban groups.

Yet, quantitative methodologies alone cannot grasp the reality and processes at work in dividing groups. Because they rely on a clear identification of excluded or separated categories, they entail the risk of reifying groups and spatial borders. They may also be blind to segregation and separations which do not depend on the specified categories. This is why, for instance, Murtagh *et al.* (2008) combined an analysis of census data and a household survey with focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews to examine segregation and territoriality in Derry/LondonDerry. They acknowledge, with Connolly and Healy (2003), that quantitative analysis should be

paired by a more qualitative approach in order to seize the complexity of group relations. Often, this qualitative part has been limited to analyses of policy-making and urban governance, based on reviews of policy documents and internal/external reports and interviews with stakeholders (Kliot and Mansfeld, 1999; Beall *et al.*, 2002; Bollens, 1998a, 2006; Murtagh *et al.*, 2008). Although fruitful, this approach problematically reproduces the categories and taxonomies of the divided city when defining analytical units, without questioning the validity of *a priori* groupings (Robinson, 2011). Rather than studying dynamics of urban divisions, they may reify these identities and the historical construction and urban divisions. Because of the ‘potential ontological proximity to determinism and its smell of behaviorism, social engineering, and manipulation’ (Fregonese and Brand, 2009:19), focusing on the role played by urban planning and governance in divisions alone is problematic.

Studies of urban divisions would benefit from a more ethnographic approach, better armed to account for the complex nature of urban divisions. To Allegra *et al.* (2012:564), addressing the city as a lived environment through ethnographic methods would ‘correct the traditional emphasis on structural, paradigmatic and essentialist explanations of urban polarization’. Such an ethnographic approach and its application to political geography have been extensively described by Megoran (2006). Examining the impact of international borders on urban internal divisions, he argues that ethnography is an appropriate tool to study the effect of boundaries drawn by political elites on individual and collective experiences of identity and representations. This method can be found in the case of a ‘divided city’, such as Beirut, in the work of Ababsa (2002) and Fregonese (2009). Visual methods have been increasingly used by geographers and social scientists as part of qualitative methodological approaches. Photographic analysis and documentation are useful to understand the representations of place and processes associated with place making (Rose, 2001; Crang, 1997; Markwell, 2000). In the case of urban divisions, they may be successful tools to analyse the political, social and cultural production of hegemonic and sectarian landscapes.

Mitchell and Kelly (2010) suggest an original field-research approach in Belfast, freely inspired by de Certeau’s (1980) theories on tactics and everyday action, i.e. *walking*. As underlined by the authors, de Certeau’s framework was not developed in the specific case of urban divisions, but was particularly attentive to everyday dynamics of conflict and contestation. It ‘helps to highlight the dynamic ways in which a number of seemingly banal everyday activities can function as tactical responses, not only to the

threat or memory of violence, but also to the policies intended to control it' (Mitchell and Kelly, 2010:6). The authors combined an ethnographic knowledge acquired by years of living in Belfast with visual anthropology techniques to focus on semiotic and physical aspects of the inhabitants' everyday life. Such a perspective may allow the researcher to intimately engage with his field of research, by taking him/herself part in the everyday practices of the researched. In the case of urban divisions or conflicts, it enables observation not only of the manner in which wider political or ideological strategies are developed in urban space and experienced by inhabitants, but also of how they are dynamically contested in everyday life.

The fact that I was an outsider<sup>1</sup> put constraints on the approaches I followed. I will now present the methods of researching and data gathering that I adopted during my three fieldworks in Skopje in August-September 2008, September-November 2010, and May-September 2011. Following a 'triangulation' approach (Hoggart *et al.*, 2002), I combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Examining divisions between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, Hargie and Dickson (2003) emphasised the need for such mixed methods in research on ethno-social divisions, especially when analysing the relations between divisions and the built environment. As argued by Murtagh *et al.* (2008:47), 'the advantage of using complementary methods is that they enhance capacities for interpreting meaning and behaviour'. By following different ways to reach the same conclusions, they ensure the validity of the results obtained. The findings of my survey, for example, confirmed several elements of my interviews or my ethnographic observation. In particular when studying practices, perceptions and representations of urban inhabitants, it is important not just to rely on one instrument of analysis. Triangulation, however, may be time-consuming: this explains why I conducted three fieldworks in Skopje, for a total of ten months. Yet, my ability to speak, read and write in Macedonian, and read and follow basic conversations in Albanian saved me time. Triangulation also contains a risk of resulting in conflicting results. To avoid a never-ending process of research, it was necessary sometimes to return to and rethink initial research questions. To Patton (2002), these conflicting results and inconsistencies are also a means to uncover new meanings and raise new issues. In my case, they helped me deepen and widen my understanding of Skopje and urban divisions. I will now describe this mixed methodology.

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<sup>1</sup> I will come back to this issue of positionality and reflexivity in section three.

## **2 Research planning and data gathering**

This section presents my data collection in Skopje during my three field visits. The timing of these visits enabled me to gain insights into how the city was changing. When I first came to Skopje in 2008, the project Skopje 2014 had not yet been disclosed and the architecture of the city centre had not changed much since socialism. Moreover, it was only seven years after the 2001 conflict, which was still fresh in people's minds, and the Stara Čaršija – seen as 'Albanian' – was avoided by ethnic Macedonians. When I came back there in 2010, Skopje 2014 had just started, as had the revitalisation of the Čaršija. It is also during this second visit that the Albanian project of Skanderbeg Square was made public. Finally, when I completed my last fieldwork, in 2011, the renovation of the city centre had made good progress; I had the opportunity to attend the installation of the statue of Alexander the Great, as well as the celebrations of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence, which were key moments in the promotion campaign of the government's urban policies. My three field visits thus enabled me to measure the changes occurring in the city and examine the expectations, perceptions and effects of recent urban politics on the life of Skopje's inhabitants. My research focused on three different, but complementary, dimensions of division which needed distinct, sometimes overlapping, methodological approaches. I discuss them in the following sections. Section one focuses on the city in its materiality, i.e. divided spaces and populations. Section two concentrates on the 'city from above', that is to say power and urban space. Finally, section three examines the 'city from below': Skopje as a lived environment.

### **2.1 The city in its materiality: divided spaces and populations**

I first examined the city as a material object. This part of my work, undertaken during my first and second fieldwork, relies on an urban geographic method, using different instruments to approach spatial differentiations within an urban framework. A dividing city is a place marked by group partitioning, and hence spatial ruptures, zoning and territorial markers that have been conceptualised differently by geographers and call for different methods of analysis. I will review these different conceptualisations here, as the methods of analysis which I adopted.

The city can be first approached as a place of discontinuity. Based on this notion, I used visual anthropology techniques, through empirical observation of the urban landscape, backed up with photographic data gathering. In my study, I supported

this work by a close examination of statistical data on a variety of indicators, including demographics, ethnicity, social and economical status, etc., which I collected from census results, national and local institutions, as well as non-profit institutions. Discontinuity is a dynamic notion that can evolve, be reinforced or disappear. I cross-referenced these results with past photographs and statistical data to get an evolutionary picture within a diachronic study of urban processes.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, the notion of discontinuity does not only refer to a linear, sudden and absolute rupture (as a wall), but may be marked by a gradual differentiation. It may also entail less explicit dynamics, conscious or unconscious variations, which have more to do with the representation or perception of the separation – as in the case of a discontinuity resulting from the urban practices of different populations. Discontinuity may also be scale-dependent. Depending on the level of analysis, the separation may be materialised differently, as by a spot, a line or an area. I tried to examine such level variation or change of scale. I recognise that my expectations were higher than the actual results I got there. I wished to gather enough data to produce a diachronic mapping of the repartition of population in the city. Unfortunately, given the lack of statistical data or, rather, the impossibility of using them in an appropriate manner for my research<sup>2</sup>, I had to drop the idea of mapping the spatial evolution of the city's population.

The second component of my research was an analysis of Skopje's spatial limits. The limit results from an action in space, for instance, of drawing a border or administrative zoning. I analysed both the origins of such actions and their impact in urban space. I therefore distinguished three different fields of analysis: administrative zoning, urban borders and the private sphere.

- *Analysis of administrative zoning and bordering*: from the end of WWII to the present day, Skopje's inner divisions have evolved a lot. From 1976 to 1996, Skopje was organised as a distinct social-political community divided in five municipalities; from 1996 to 2004, the city was defined as a unit of local self-government with seven municipalities; since 2004, it was reorganized as Greater Skopje in ten different municipalities, defined by the Law of Skopje and comprised in the Skopje statistical region. Given that the Ohrid Framework Agreement included special provisions on municipal level regarding

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<sup>2</sup> This is due, for instance, to the manifold changes brought to administrative borders in the last decades and the impossibility to map these changes and extract clear data.

decentralisation and local government (on issues such as the use of minority languages, education, local police, etc.), I explored the role and potential impact of administrative zoning in interethnic relations and how it might be a stake for various groups competing for representation. I also examined whether these limits have been formalized in urban space. Due to the lack of cartographical data, I restricted this issue to the separation between the municipalities of Centar and Čair. I based this analysis on an examination of archival and official documents and of the urban landscape (street signs, flags, etc.), backed up by photographic data collection.

- *Urban borders:* I drew from Markus's (1986) typology of urban barriers to examine in more depth urban space. My analysis of urban internal barriers and territorial markers is based on close observation of the urban landscape supported by photographic data gathering. I examined in particular the river Vardar as a place of discontinuity and an interface between the old and the new town and between communities in the city centre.
- *Private space:* I analysed individual and collective zoning at a private level. I examined processes of closure and limit drawing of the public space undertaken by communities or individuals marking isolation of segregation (gated communities, private streets, fences, symbolical markers of ethnic enclaves and ghettos, etc.). As a visual communication system, these elements were analysed by visual methods of data gathering, including photography, archives, newspapers, corporate and private collections.

I accessed archival material thanks to the Museum of the City of Skopje, which published a book on the life in Skopje during the interwar (Kačeva, and al., 2006) and gave me access to old photographs. Some historical documents, such as postcards of Skopje, may also be found online on Macedonian websites. I also collected official documents and reports published by local NGOs, national associations, international organisations or public institutions during my interviews and visits to their locals. I collected other official material online, such as strategic and spatial plans for local development of Skopje municipalities, as well as demographic and statistic data (for example, the census results are accessible on the national statistical office website<sup>3</sup>). The great majority of these documents were in Macedonian, with some in Albanian or other

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<sup>3</sup> Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office: <http://www.stat.gov.mk>



Balkan languages. Very few books in English or French have been written on Macedonia, let alone on Skopje.

These methods enabled me to conceptualize the multidimensional and multiscale processes of divisions through an examination of urban zoning and bordering. Lines of separation may be more or less fixed, delimited and significant. As the interest of spatial borders does not only lie in their physicality and ‘objectivity’, it was fundamental to understand what rationale and practical actions led to their edification.

## **2.2 The city from above: power and urban space**

I chose to examine the logic of planning as a method of decision-making and assertion of power at different levels and following different qualitative methods. This component of my research was mainly undertaken during my second fieldwork in Skopje.

Planning entails various levels. I distinguished planning associated with the public sector, the non-profit sector and the private sector. The public sector being the most important to my analysis of Skopje, I divided it in three different levels of analysis: local municipality, metropolitan area governance and the national government. I also identified the various stakeholders involved in planning, i.e. elected officials, public and private agencies, business representatives, developers, community groups, etc. Finally, I distinguished two scales of planning which required different approaches: the municipal and neighbourhood scale, and the metropolitan area.

I carried out 35 semi-directive interviews (1-3 hours-long in most cases - *cf. Annex 2*) with national and foreign experts in architecture and planning, academics in private and public universities, politicians and officials at municipal and national levels, members of local NGOs or international organisations, journalists and researchers. I also had a lot of more informal exchanges with young and older people from different ethnic backgrounds, living in different parts of the city and in various job positions. Interviews are often time-consuming to carry out, transcribe and analyse, but they also provide insights that are absent from surveys and can guide them. The questions were usually asked in a non-directive manner and they evolved during the time of the interview, often ending in a discussion.

This series of interviews focused on different issues:

- Various urban dimensions: land use, economic development, transportation, urban design, recreation, historical heritage, housing and social equality. This enabled me to identify the methods deployed by planners to evaluate, implement and share knowledge of their projects.
- Assumptions, strategies or values guiding urban interventions. I distinguished the displayed objectives and options in planning discourse from less openly assumed rationales of actions: stereotyped official language had to be deciphered with care.
- Degree of interaction between the various stakeholders, as well as the level of public and private participation.
- Public and private reactions to planning (non-profit sectors, residents associations, media, advertising and communication, etc.)

I supported these interviews with collecting documents related to urban planning. This mainly implied archival documents, Master plans, municipal plans, planning tools (inventory and classifications, GIS, etc.), official communications, programmes, work documents, etc. Apart from those I bought, most of the documents and books I collected were given to me by the people I met. I thus managed to get the 1965 and 1985 urban Master Plans, as well as the 1965 *Social Survey*, thanks to the same PhD candidate in architecture who had received them from her mother, a former architect under the socialist regime. It was an incredible opportunity to get access to these documents, which I scanned before giving them back. Some of the documents that were given to me are very difficult to get otherwise, and some of the books I read were not even published. Via contacts in the Macedonian architectural sphere, I accessed other documents, such as the texts and maps of the competitions for the Skopje 2014 monuments, or pictures of the Skanderbeg project. I accessed political programs online; others were given to me during the June 2011 elections.

The aim of this data collection was to analyse the political and ideological considerations guiding the spatial evolution of the city. In order to get a comprehensive understanding of the processes at work in a dividing city, it was also essential to pay

attention to the lived experience of its inhabitants – which was the object of my third fieldwork.

## **2.3 The city from below: Skopje as a lived environment**

### *2.3.1 Ethnographic methodology*

During my third fieldwork I reverted to a more ethnographic approach in which I favoured lengthy discussions, life-stories and participant observation. During this final and longest fieldwork (it lasted five and a half months), I also conducted a survey to explore representations, perceptions, discourses and practices of urban inhabitants.

The first component of this approach was my routine experience of living in the centre of Skopje. Data collection was here based on participant observation. I spent a lot of time observing the daily events and interactions around the building where I lived and in my neighbourhood, and walking through the city. My walks brought me to places where I would not have been otherwise and discover things that are less visible than open strategies of power. Walking through the city centre, from the ‘Macedonian side’ to the ‘Albanian side’ through the disputed buffer-zone, seemed one of the most natural ways to approach this area, understand its everyday functioning, and get a different account than the one usually offered by media and political coverage. This is why I usually walked every day alone in the city for at least one or two hours. My walks varied on a daily basis: I could stay in Centar, go to Čair or walk towards a peripheral municipality. Other times, I chose to pay closer attention to my trajectory than to the place where I went, for example, when I was crossing from one monoethnic area to another, as from the Macedonia square to the Čaršija. I then focused on the gradual changes in the landscape or the people I met. I also sometimes walked with a precise goal in my mind (a place to go, an event, something to observe, etc.), or, other times, stopped in a place for an hour or more to observe the practices and interactions occurring in that precise place. I also had some ‘routine’ walks: every morning between 7 and 8, I walked from my place to the riverside where I jogged. I often found the same people in their daily activities, chatting while enjoying their morning coffee, getting to work, or cleaning their shops. Being in these places so early in the morning, when the city was still waking up, was also a good way to ‘catch’ things that did not appear later in the day, such as the presence of Roma cleaners and their temporary interaction with the taxi-drivers or other customers at the coffeehouse.

Participant observation was backed up by informal and open-ended interviews, participation in everyday life, focus group discussions, life-histories and analyses of personal documents (photographies, texts, etc.) produced by groups and individuals. I used mental mapping to understand how the geography of the city could be perceived by its inhabitants. Formal mental mapping was only used twice, as a pilot test: a blank map of Skopje was given to the interviewees who had to fill it according to their practices and perceptions of the city's different areas. Although showing some interesting results, I decided not to continue with this method which appeared to me cumbersome and less spontaneous than open-ended interviews. I rather opted for informal mental mapping in interviews and discussions. Questions involved the interviewees' perceptions and practices of the city, with or without the help of a map. This multidimensional method helped me observe discrepancies between the participants' discourses and representations on the one hand and their practices on the other. For instance, many interviewees declared that they never went to a certain area in the city (ethnic Macedonians about predominantly Albanian- or Roma-populated areas, or ethnic Albanians about Macedonian cafés in Centar). Yet, a close observation of their practices showed that they actually went there more or less regularly (in the case of a special event, a specific destination – market, university, hospital – or as part of their trajectory to go to work, to visit family or friends, etc.). In total, I had extensive discussions with 75 other people (*cf. Annex 2*), in some cases several times, collecting 28 life-stories. I also had many other conversations with other people during my three fieldwork periods, which I did not record extensively in my notebooks but which influenced my overall analysis of Skopje as a lived environment.

I also read local newspapers on a daily basis. As most of the main Macedonian newspapers and magazines are available online, I was able to keep up to date with the latest national and local news. I usually read several newspapers representing different political currents: pro-government (*Vreme, Večer, Nova Makedonija*), pro-opposition (*Dnevnik, Fokus*) or independent (*Utrinski Vesnik*). Contrary to many other world cities, Skopje does not have its own local news, but all the major national newspapers have a special section devoted to the capital city, which I read attentively every day. I also read international online Balkans news, with websites such as *Balkan Insight* or *Le courier des Balkans*. Finally, I often read websites and blogs written by alternative groups or individuals, such as *okno*, held by the editor of *Templum*, one of the only independent (and anti-government) publishing companies. I regularly went to bookshops, especially

a second-hand shop in the centre where I found most of my books on the history of Skopje and the Čaršija, as well as all the books published by *Templum* and *Ploshtad Sloboda*, among which the *City* book series, a collection written collectively by artists, architects and experts on Skopje 2014. The other books I used were given to me by the people I met during fieldwork, such as works on the history of Macedonian architecture written by a professor of architecture I interviewed or an architectural guide to Skopje, written by a PhD candidate in architecture whom I knew.

### 2.3.2 Survey

An important part of my research is based on a survey (*cf. Annex 3*) which was carried out in June-July 2011 and which aimed at exploring the practices, discourses, perceptions and representations of Skopjani in the city centre. More interviews were conducted after the end of the survey, addressing some of the questions brought up by the first survey findings. The aims of the survey were threefold: first, to explore the practices of Skopjani in the city centre; second, to learn about their attitudes towards the project Skopje 2014 and its influence on their practices in and perceptions of the city centre; third, to compare their practices, perceptions and personal feelings in the Southern (Square Macedonia – Centar) and the Northern part (Stara Čaršija – Čair) of the city centre, including a more general enquiry on Skopje as a cosmopolitan/fragmented city. The survey complemented findings from the interviews and ethnographic methods. It also highlighted issues that could later be investigated in further data gathering stages. Using a survey was also a way to collect larger amounts of data in a shorter time than interviews only would have permitted.

The survey was conducted in form of a questionnaire and distributed after an initial pilot study. The sampling population of the research project consisted of 223 cafés customers older than 18 years (as the survey was not designed to explore the views of children) of the South part of the city centre. Due to time and monetary constraints, purposive sampling was chosen over representative sampling to select the cafés in which the survey was conducted. Three areas around Macedonia Square (Macedonia Street, the Quay and the Square itself) were chosen, because of their location and the variety of their cafés and customers. Nine cafés were then selected in these areas. Random sample guided the choice of participants. Paper-based questionnaires were distributed at different hours of the day and days of the week in

order to obtain a large sample of respondents who were selected randomly (to all the customers present in the cafés who accepted to take part in the survey), which assured responses from individuals of different gender, age groups and professional backgrounds. The sample size of 223 individuals was judged sufficient to provide an overview of the participants' practices, perceptions and representations at the time of data collection. Respondents were not asked to fill in their name, so ethical guidelines were carefully followed and anonymity ensured in the survey.

The questionnaire was pilot tested before dissemination to avoid misleading questions and causes of confusion. Two questionnaires were first distributed to friends and colleagues to check the language (questionnaires were in Macedonian), feasibility and compliance with the research objectives. Their comments and feedback helped me modify some questions. 25 questionnaires were then distributed as a pilot test to customers in the selected cafés of the study. After an initial analysis of the pilot survey data, the number of questions was reduced from 22 to 20, the layout condensed and some questions slightly amended. The survey was then disseminated among customers in cafés: response rate and quality of survey data was high, because of the questionnaire distribution on a personal basis. Between a fifth and a quarter of people refused to fill in the questionnaire.

The survey included both closed- and open-ended questions. Multiple choice questions, in which respondents had to choose one response from a list of alternatives, were often followed by open questions asking to justify or develop their answer. Given that respondents' perceptions and representations are at the heart of qualitative research, this type of questions allowed participants to present and formulate their own statements. Questionnaires-based surveys with closed-questions only may be seen as capturing surface opinions already framed by the available answers. Rather than simply asking the respondents to choose among a limited number of options, open-ended questions enabled to overcome this limitation and allow individuals to express further opinions, variations of and deviations from the categorised possibilities. Although more time-consuming and difficult to analyse, open-ended questions help to obtain a better idea of individual's opinion and can also lead to unexpected responses. Non-committal responses ('don't know', 'other') were included (as the last in the list of alternatives) to avoid false or unreliable answers.

I combined the survey with extensive discussions with 16 customers and 8 semi-directive interviews with waiters. The customers initiated the conversations with me, after having filled the questionnaires. During these interviews, I tried not to restrain the participants and instead give them time to talk about their perceptions of the city centre, the recent urban changes and the Stara Čaršija. The interviews with waiters were aimed at learning about the waiters' own perceptions on these issues, but some of my questions concerned their customers and their practices. The interviews complemented findings from the survey and allowed me to explore in more detail interesting cases mentioned in the questionnaire's responses. The data collection and analysis of my study took place in alternating sequences. I will present these after having first reflected on the research's positionality and ethnics.

### **3 Positionality and Ethics**

Fieldwork involves a number of dilemmas and problems that can be acknowledged, but only partially addressed. Following an ethnographic approach is of use to understand the city, not only as a place of power, but also as a lived environment. Yet, this does not mean that it is an objective and impartial method. As Amster (2004:5) put it in provocative terms: 'a researcher without a bias is either dishonest, disinterested, or dead'. In particular, ethnography implies a process of production of knowledge affected by power relation between the researcher and the researched. Power structures not only Skopje as a dividing city, but also my own engagement with it as a researcher. Critical theory has recognised the problem of subjectivity and reflected on the need to make the subjectivity (eg. positionality) prominent in the researcher's work (Becker, 1970<sup>4</sup>; cf. Amster, 2004). Hopkins (2007) argues that researchers should consider both the similarities, differences and positions of 'betweenness' (Nast, 1994:57<sup>5</sup>; cf. Hopkins, 2007) between themselves and the participants, and use them constructively. By this objectification of the subjective, objectivity is thought to be regained as much as possible. To feminist and critical geographers, accepting our positionality is inescapable and even essential for research (Hopkins, 2007). Reflexivity allows the researcher to understand how research is constructed with him/her being part of the research process. As underlined by Fregonese (2009:312), 'this process of knowledge production aims at

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<sup>4</sup> Becker, H. S. (1970) *Sociological Work: Method and Substance*. Chicago: Aldine.

<sup>5</sup> Nast, H. (1994) *Women in the field : Critical feminist methodologies and theoretical perspectives*. In: *Professional Geographer* 46, 1. p. 54-66.

grasping the aspects that make certain mechanisms and relations possible, rather than discovering immobile truths'. ). Oldrup and Carstensen (2012:235) warn against the perception of visual media as offering an opportunity for the researcher to come 'closer' to everyday life and argue that social scientists should be reflective about the kind of knowledge they produce, which 'depends on the theoretical perspectives that we adopt in our research'. Researching in a dividing city on politically problematic issues as a privileged outsider (being a French citizen and a young woman studying in a British university), I recognised these issues and challenges that are inherent to qualitative method and reflected on my own positionality.

Connolly and Healy (2003, cf. Murtagh *et al.*, 2008) developed the following criteria for researchers to deal with vulnerable groups (in their case, in Northern Ireland): avoiding forging or falsifying research findings; conducting research with integrity and in a way that should not put at risk future research; standing publicly or publishing and promoting the research's findings; respecting the rights and dignity of all those involved in or affected by the study; ensuring the physical, social and psychological well-being of the research participants or all those affected by it. The authors also underline the responsibility of researchers to report their research comprehensively and accurately, and present their methods, data and study findings objectively. These criteria have guided my field visits in Skopje and are at the heart of my methodology.

The study was guided by ethical principles in research with human participants and approved by the UCL Ethics Research Committee. It was also compliant with the 1998 UK Data Protection Act and the 2005 Macedonia Data Protection Act. Before agreeing to participate in it, the participants were informed about the study, its aims and objectives, as well as the possibility of withdrawal at any moment. Interviews data were treated confidentially and anonymised by replacing the respondents' names with letters (A-Z). The survey was conducted on an anonymous basis. Personal data have not been disclosed in the thesis. Any elements of information relative to the participants were removed if there were a possibility for them to be identified despite anonymisation.



## **4 Data analysis**

### **4.1 Data management procedures**

For this study, data gathering was backed up by several instruments. Semi-directed interviews were either noted during the time of the interview or recorded with the help of a digital recorder. Open-ended interviews (usually, unexpected) were only noted back home in Skopje on the same day. I recognised that the use of a recorder could engender mistrust and lead to unreliable or less sincere answers. Therefore, recording interviews only happened in special occasions: when note taking was impossible, when the language was not Macedonian (or difficult to grasp) or when the discourse form was judged as important as its content. ‘Special’ events, such as the installation of the statue of Alexander the Great on the Square in June 2011, also led to the use of a recorder in the form of very short interviews (‘pavement-radio’) to collect the immediate impressions of Skopjani on this extraordinary event. Interviews were then transcribed on a daily basis using Microsoft Word. Field notes were written up in a day-to-day notebook based on participant observation and ethnographic methods. In order to distinguish data collection from subjective and personal associations, this notebook was kept separate from the one in which interviews were collected.

Visual methods were also based on the use of a camera and, during the third field visit, a video camera. It was recognised that a camera can be perceived as an obstacle between the researcher and the participants, so it was only used when no interviews were scheduled or in the case of special events. While photographs were always taken dynamically and following an exploratory approach, video were filmed in a more static way. Given that I had originally intended to make a documentary film of my research, scenes were determined before actual filming. The camera was then installed on a tripod at one place for 15-30 minutes before moving to another spot. In addition, three interviews (including one life-story) were filmed during the last field visit.

The survey questionnaires were collected and read, before being classified for subsequent analysis. The survey data were then entered into an Excel spreadsheet where they were organised and analysed.

## 4.2 Analysis of findings

Collected data were first coded. Coding is a necessary step of data analysis, which enables to depart from an individual and anecdotic level to reach a more abstract degree of interpretation. It is therefore a key phase between data gathering and theory developing. Open coding was used to identify and label events to produce a list of themes. For this initial brain storm coding, I chose not to use a specific software, but only pen and post-it-notes. Codes were not strict and exclusive, and the same line in the interview transcript could appear in several codes. Data were thus broken down and conceptualised in the following analytical categories: *urban planning, intercommunity relations, spatial practices, banal nationalism, public space, subversive groups, perceptions and self-representations, social situation & poverty, Socialism and socialist Macedonia, markets & shopping centre, places of leisure & socialising, events*. I did not use axial coding which I found too rigid in the case of ethnographic methods. I opted instead for a less formal reflection on categories, which enabled me to connect and compare the latter. This system of combined coding and reflection was kept for coding all interviews, with the list of codes revised and amended on a regular basis. Interview transcripts were then reorganised in Word documents following the categories of analysis.

Responses to the survey closed-questions were analysed with Excel. They were then compared with the categories identified in the interview coding, so as to ensure the validity of the findings through this process of triangulation between quantitative and qualitative data. In order to further certify the validity of the findings, data analysis was also based on a process of abduction. Data observation leads to the formulation of a hypothetical explanation, which further data analysis either confirms or refutes. The repetition of this process enables to find the most plausible theoretical interpretation of the research data. Data findings were then compared with the reviewed literature (Ch. 1) and used in the writing of the analytical chapters (Ch. 3-7).

This chapter introduced and discussed the choice of a mixed methodology, based on quantitative and qualitative approaches, as an appropriate research method for this study. I distinguished three complementary aspects of my research on dividing cities, with Skopje as a case-study – urban divisions, power and urban space and the city as a

lived environment. I discussed the different methodological approaches I chose to adopt for them. The chapter attempted to explain in detail each of the three methods and data collection phases. It also presented the changes and adjustments that occurred during the field visits, as well as the abduction process followed in data collection and analysis, meant to ensure the robustness of the study's results. The research findings will now be analysed in more detail in the following chapters.

– CHAPTER 3 –

## OTTOMAN SKOPJE: A NOT-SO DIVIDED CITY?

*Dialogue with a driver of an informal minibus taxi at Kamen Most (Stone Bridge)*

*The driver:* ‘Tetovo, Gostivar?’

- No, thank you. But, may I ask you something? Why are the taxi drivers divided? I noticed that here they are driving only to Tetovo and Gostivar, to Western Macedonia...

*The driver:* That’s right, that’s right. Here and in front of the Stokovna Kukja Most they are driving to the West. Over there, in front of the Jewish Museum, are those driving to the East.

- But why separated?

*The driver:* No, no, why are you separating us? The politicians are separating us! We are just here because from here it is easier to get to the road to Tetovo. I’m not supposed to make huge turns in the city. And the old bus station was here, too... maybe it is a habit.

(Reported in Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011:58)

This dialogue suggests something about the complexity of the issue of Skopje *as* a divided city. From the Ottoman Empire to the present day, many narratives have appealed to history to explain the present situation. Rereading history is a normative act, which works by inclusion and exclusion, identification and differentiation. Collective memory is therefore ideological and may be used as an instrument of power. The image of Skopje as a divided city is a good example of how memory is constructed and utilised by urban elites. Macedonian collective memory is built on the idea that Skopje’s divisions take their roots in past history, and especially the Ottoman era. This view fits the nationalist thesis of the Macedonian governing elite, which seeks to detach Macedonian national history from its Ottoman/Islamic legacies. It is also guided by determinism, since it implicitly implies that interethnic divisions in Skopje are centuries

old and that going against this deep-rooted reality is almost an impossible task. The main material expression of this rereading of history is the current transformation of the city centre, the *Skopje 2014* project, the aim of which, I argue, is to revive imaginary past glories and forget other historical legacies, in particular the Ottoman period.

My thesis goes against this essentialist narrative and argues that the officially Macedonian propagated image of Skopje's history has been constructed *as* the memory of a divided city. Drawing on existing critical accounts of Ottoman cities and considering features specific to Skopje, this chapter and the following one show that this view originates from an erroneous perception of Ottoman cities and the modernisation process that occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

According to Macedonian historiography<sup>1</sup>, the modern and contemporary history of Skopje is subdivided into three main periods: the Ottoman era, running from 1392 to 1912; the interwar era, when Macedonia was under the Kingdom of Serbia and, then, of Yugoslavia, from 1912 to 1941; and the Socialist era from the end of WWII to 1991 – as many periods as the names given to the city: Üsküb, then Skoplje, and, eventually, Skopje. The three epochs are imagined through problematic stereotypes. The first stereotype is that Ottoman Skopje was a segregated city, from which today's divisions are descended. Second, that the shift in the core of the city from the old Ottoman centre to the right side of the Vardar during the interwar period marked the entry of Skopje into 'modernity'. Third, with the 1963 earthquake and the reconstruction of the city centre during socialism, Skopje lost its soul. According to this stereotype, urban divisions were only hushed up during socialism until the 'rebirth' of tensions in the 1990s.

I question these seemingly clear-cut periods and stereotypes and suggest a perspective based on a different understanding of *modernisation*. Modernisation theory has been much discussed in the past decades, as has been the meaning attributed to 'modernisation'. In the Balkans, nationalist and Orientalist ideas have equated modernisation with *Europeanisation* or *Westernisation*, and the Ottoman Empire with archaism and backwardness. This can be traced back to the first wave of modernisation theory, which conflated modernisation with Westernisation and saw the diffusion of Western ideas and styles of living as a superior development in primitive societies

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<sup>1</sup> In my thesis, I use the terms 'Macedonian historiography' without pointing at any historian in particular, but to refer to the 'official' account of history that is promoted by the Macedonian government and state institutions in public media, museums, school and university programs, since 1945 and, more specifically, the independence.

(Lerner, 1958; Schramm, 1964). Rather than adopting this Eurocentric vision, implying a relationship of ‘ahead’ and ‘behind’ (Breuilly, 2005), I rather see the binary traditional/modern as interdependent and characterise modernisation as progressive changes brought by industrialisation, urbanisation, literacy, mass media and education. It is in this sense that I see different waves of modernisation in Macedonia and argue that the conventional perception of modernisation and the periodisation that it entails participate in the scenario of the divided city. I suggest another periodisation of modernisation: first, an *Ottoman* modernisation, which ended at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; second, a *European* modernisation which took over from the previous era, including the Tanzimat and pre-independences period, until the early 1960s; finally, an *International* modernisation which started with the 1963 earthquake and ended in the first years of the transition, when Skopje’s development was not following a decided urban plan anymore.

In this chapter, I analyse the history of Skopje up to the twentieth century and contrast the officially propagated collective memory of a divided city with an alternative history of modern and contemporary Skopje that is more in keeping with available empirical evidence. Because deterministic scenarios are a means for urban authorities to assert their power and clear themselves of responsibility, I shed light on one of the favourite scapegoats of the current authorities – the Ottoman period. The questions I address are the following: was Ottoman Skopje really a divided city? To what extent do today’s divisions really stem from the Ottoman city? Section one reviews and discusses how stereotypes associated with Ottoman cities have been reproduced in academic research. Section two analyses the geographies of Skopje under the Ottoman rule. Section three discusses in more detail the ‘European’ modernisation of Skopje and its impact on the city’s structure and development.

## **1 Questioning ‘the Ottoman city’**

In 1392, Skopje, which had been capital of the Serbian Empire since 1346, was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. Soon after, it was promoted to be the capital of the Sanjak of Üsküb and eventually ended up as the administrative centre of the Kosovo Vilayet within the Empire. Having been a Christian city of mostly Slav-speaking inhabitants, Skopje came under the rule of a Muslim and multicultural Empire, which strongly influenced both the organisation and appearance of the city. Muslim

populations settled in Skopje, joined a century later by Sephardic Jewish migrants driven out of Spain, changing considerably the general outlook of the city. While the Ottoman Empire was geographically and socially complex, the idea endures of *the* Ottoman city as a paradigm of a divided city that reflects the segmentation and compartmentalisation of Ottoman society more generally. There is an extensive literature on Ottoman cities, but it is not without its problems, among which an extrapolation from official structures to everyday life, over-generalisation, Orientalism and patchy sources. I will examine in more details these different aspects which feed deterministic narratives in the present.

### **1.1 Problematic aspects of the literature on Ottoman cities**

The first problem is one of extrapolation: the Empire's official approach to administering its population is problematically transposed to its geography and populations.

In the Empire, religiously-demarcated groups (with the major differentiation being between Muslims and non-Muslims) were defined as *millets* and were accorded semi-autonomous status. Society was stratified into two groups, with Non-Muslims having a lower status than Muslims, along with special rules and restrictions. Respective social positions and rights were strictly defined by Ottoman law, despite a certain amount of independence in internal and private spheres (such as family matters and weddings). Individuals were seen as believers before being rural inhabitants, city dwellers or members of a linguistic community. A political condition based on religious principles was thus responsible for social stratification. This partition was translated into a strict division of labour according to confessional belonging, primarily with Muslim or Christian *esnafs* (guilds) and very few mixed. This organisation has an economic component, with church leaders often controlling the wealth of their community independently of the Ottoman state. According to Cole (1981:118-119), it was a system 'characterised by economic interdependence organised along ethnic lines [...] While not every guild would be a separate ethnic group, access to any particular guild was generally limited to members of a single ethnic groups'. The longer a region had been multiethnic, the more likely its production was specialised along ethnic lines. Given that each ethnic community used the opportunities created by the Empire to move from city to city, a group which had the monopoly on a craft or business in one place

was also able to dominate that occupation throughout the Empire. Consequently, the types of resources to which individuals had access depended on their ethnic identity, as argued by Cole (1981:119): ‘there were strong social pressures on each ethnic group to maintain exclusive access to economic specialities. The promotion of cultural differences, the linking of ethnic symbols with particular economic practices, and their use to regulate social behaviour both within and between groups all contributed to this end’.

This seemingly rigid, overarching structure led many external observers to believe that these demarcations were in fact reproduced by individuals in their own lives, for example that non-Muslims perceived themselves and were perceived as a minority group vis-à-vis the Muslims (Göçek, 1993). This led Karal (1982: 387, cf. Göçek, 1993:514) to depict the Ottoman Empire as home to ‘two societies, side by side, with unequal rights’. The impression of a partitioned society may also be imputed to the further official division of millets into various communities, heterogeneous in terms of language and ‘ethnicity’<sup>2</sup>. The community was a recognised and structured group, responsible for its own affairs, composed of individuals sharing the same religion and origin. According to Ilbert (1992:182), it was ‘a social unit, with specific mechanisms of integration, which organised loyalties and determined the individual status of each member’<sup>3</sup>. Every ‘key’ moment of the life of an individual (birth, education, wedding and death) was taken in charge and controlled by the religious leaders of the community. The *Rûm* (Orthodox) millet, whose hierarchy was mainly under the influence of Hellenism, included groups defining themselves as Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian, Vlach and Romanian, and which would constitute the basis of the 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist movements.

Assimilation was never a strategy of the central government: this acculturation policy explains the emphasis put by most students of the Ottoman Empire on social and cultural differentiation. Vucinich (1962), for instance, argued that the Ottoman system led to the preservation of groups as legal entities, socially exclusive and culturally self-contained. To Cole (1981:119), ‘the weight of the imperial state was placed behind the perpetuation of ethnic differentiation’. Dumont and Georgeon (1997) referred to the Ottoman society as a flat in which each community would live secluded, with the only

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<sup>2</sup> Except perhaps for the Jewish millet, united around the rabbinate and speaking mostly Ladino (Lory and Popovic, 1992)

<sup>3</sup> ‘une unité sociale, dotée de mécanismes intégrateurs spécifiques, qui organisait les loyautés, et fixait le statut personnel de chacun’



potential contacts taking place in the corridor. According to Barkey (2005), the Empire was organised in terms of communities that were separate, unequal and protected.

This extrapolation from the administrative organisation of the Empire to the geography and lived experience of its subjects has important consequences for how Ottoman cities have been perceived. The imperial law delimited the status of individuals, by identifying them on the basis of their place of living in the city. The legal Muslim/Non-Muslim demarcation was thus translated into a series of judiciary measures likely to affect urban space. The law for instance forbade minority groups to build or occupy houses near a Muslim place of worship and to have new places of worship erected. Göçek (1993) reports that their constructions could not be higher than the Muslim ones and could not be made of other material than freestone. Barkey (2005) recalls that they were forbidden to ride horses, they had to make way for Muslims and engage in continuous acts of deference, and they were not allowed to wear Muslim dress<sup>4</sup>. According to Vucinich (1962), certain groups were subjected to even stronger discriminatory measures: Gypsies had to pay a special tax and a restrictive legislation applied to them. While non-Muslims interacted with Muslims at the *Čaršija*, in *hans*<sup>5</sup> and in business places, other centres of social life (mosques, hammams, coffeehouses) seemed most of the time closed to them. These restrictions led Göçek (1993) to conclude that that social interactions between communities were confined to professional and economic activities and that social ties could not develop outside of the community. The apparent sub-division into quarters, the *mahalla*<sup>6</sup>, based on religious and ethnic belonging, also plays a major role in the image of Ottoman cities as divided. Yerolympos (1993: 236) refers to ‘a polyethnic population living in separate residential quarters each with an introverted, strictly supervised communal life of its own’. Mazower (2005) also refers to Salonica as a city of three faiths, three races, which never fused into unity and remained a juxtaposition of small villages keeping away from the others. Minassian (1992) argues that the main communities of Van lived in separate areas with barely any contact with each other. Yerasimos (1992:29) refers to ‘tribal units’ in Kufa, living secluded in their respective neighbourhoods and hostile towards each other.

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<sup>4</sup> Vucinich (1962) stressed the socio-psychological implications of this clothing discrimination, by recalling the first impulse of liberated Serbs in 1804 to don the Turkish dress.

<sup>5</sup> See for example the analysis of the *hans* as a lived space by Tamdoğan-Abel (1997)

<sup>6</sup> Or *maala* in Macedonian (singular: *maalo*).

All those studies reach the same conclusion: without any municipal institutions and with each community having its own autonomous administration, Ottoman cities were divided places. Despite being home to multiple communities, they could not be referred to as cosmopolitan. To Humphrey and Skvirskaja (2012:1), 'the presence of social multiplicity in a given place, although a necessary precondition, does not by itself imply or lead to cosmopolitanism.' According to Ilbert (1992), some cities of the Empire could be said to be 'cosmopolitan' in the sense of a coexistence of populations with different languages, cultures and religions in a same space, but such juxtaposition did not entail a process of intermingling and integration. Donia (2006:355) writes that 'common life was a product of reaching across ethnonational boundaries rather than erasing them'. To most authors, Ottoman cities were therefore not cosmopolitan in the sense of a community of interests or a melting-pot, but they were rather a contiguity of groups whose relations were carefully delimited and fragile.

A second problematic aspect of most studies of Ottoman cities is their tendency towards over-generalisation. Indeed, many of the historical studies previously mentioned focused on major Ottoman cities, such as Istanbul, Izmir or Alexandria. In comparison, less attention has been paid to small or middle-size urban centres, such as Skopje. Due to the unavailability of sources, our knowledge of these cities and, in particular, non-Arab cities in Anatolia or the Balkans, is more limited (Eldhem *et al.*, 1999) and mostly drawn from generalisations based on bigger urban settlements.

A third problem lies in the influence of Orientalism on these studies and, more generally, on Western European historiography. Said (1978) referred to the Orient as a European invention, based on a built representation of the 'Other', and which helped define the West as its contrasting image. A similar construction pattern can be observed in the way the image of Ottoman cities has been constructed. Eldhem *et al.* (1999) trace the origin of the *Ottoman city* idea back to Weber (1921), who defined a 'city' as a self-governing commune whose inhabitants possess a distinct sense of collective identity. To him, Christian European urban centres were the only ones worthy of the appellation. Because Islamic and Oriental urban centres were inhabited by distinct clan or tribal groups, they could not be proper 'cities'. Weber argued that political fragmentation and social alienation was directly mirrored in the physical structure of Oriental cities: whereas modern European cities rested upon rational topographies and open public spaces, the walled, secretive houses and the manifold impasses of Oriental cities were a proof of their inherent 'non-urban' nature. He saw the pervasive role of Islam in urban

development as a shared characteristic which made Oriental cities monolithic and undifferentiated.

Due to the paucity of historiographic information and the longevity of these assumptions in academia, it is only recently that such views have been challenged and that historians have rejected the idea of a normative Ottoman, Arab or Islamic city ‘that [would] impose fundamentally unique and thus ghettoising characteristics upon such urban centres and inhabitants’ (Eldhem *et al.*, 1999:2). The prejudice over Ottoman cities – still prevailing in the politics of post-imperial urban centres, such as Skopje – may be explained by the lack of understanding of their inherent organisation and their constant comparisons with Western European cities. While it is true that there was no ‘typical’ Ottoman city, there are a few common characteristics which made imperial urban centres particular and which can explicate the general misunderstanding of their functioning. When Weber described the Islamic city, he referred to some topographical details which made them different to Western cities, such as walls, blind-alleys and closed houses, to which may be added their apparently labyrinthine appearance. Those ‘negative’ characteristics have nurtured stereotypes of Ottoman urban centres<sup>7</sup> and form part of the Orientalist paradigm. The existence of such stereotypes also denies the benefits brought by the Tanzimat, by attributing them to the urban politics of the new nation-states. They nourish the idea that, from medieval, chaotic and dirty spaces, urban centres would have suddenly switched with the liberation from the Empire to modern, organised and Western spaces, promoting the image of a binary opposition between a backward Orient and a modern West. However, as I will argue in chapter 4, this attempt to ‘modernise’ urban centres began long before the actual fall of the Empire and the post-imperial effort to change cities should rather be seen as a continuation of the process initiated by the Ottomans in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Finally, a last element may explain why a large number of studies saw Ottoman cities as divided places: the patchy sources used to support historical narratives. As Eldhem *et al.* (1999) argue, many studies have focused on the imperial cities’ government, quarters or communities, but less on cities as unified wholes. These approaches do not reflect a chaos inherent to the city, but are mostly due to the intimidating complexity of documentation and its often problematic nature. Smyrnelis

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<sup>7</sup> Western-Anatolian cities have probably been, more than any other, victim of prejudices towards Ottoman urban centres (Eldhem, Goffman and Masters, 1999). Their Roman or Greek legacies, on which Western studies particularly focused – especially, on the classical Ionian and Byzantine heritage – have led historians to usually consider the Ottoman period as culturally and architecturally barren – a misconception that left many traces in post-Ottoman urban policies and common views.

(1997) shares this view and argues that analysing the independent functioning and organisation of various communities seems easier than the relations that existed between them. He further shows that whenever intercommunity relations have been analysed, it was often in the case of group conflicts and hence urban divisions. Echoing that idea, Dumont (1992) explains that our understanding of Ottoman history has been highly influenced by unusual episodes, such as an epidemic or a dispute, from which general conclusions may have promptly been drawn. This is due to two reasons. First, historians have mostly focused on the formative and final eras of Ottoman history and therefore emphasised attributes – such as ethnic and religious tensions – that distinguished the Empire's cities in the last decades of its rule (Eldhem *et al.*, 1999). Second, inter-ethnic and -religious conflicts are more prominent events than long-term peaceful relations – hence, their greater likelihood to be recorded in testimonial accounts and to attract the attention of social scientists.

Knowledge of Ottoman cities may have become keener since the 1970s thanks to the discovery of underutilised sources, but, as shown by Eldhem *et al.* (1999), these data are also problematic. Many recent historical studies are based on urban biographies, chronicles, records of the *kadi* (judge) courts and the central Ottoman archives. In most Balkan cities, historians must rely on such sources since all other documents are missing. This heavy reliance on official Ottoman accounts leads to the following problem: while the *kadi*'s deliberations reveal much about the social structure of the Ottoman city, we can only make hypotheses on what was going on outside the courts. As highlighted by Smyrnelis (1997), the inter-community relations that we study (such as conflicts and weddings) have been 'officialised', hence their presence in the archives. They presuppose that more informal and flexible relations were pre-existing, and there were probably more inter-community or inter-personal relations that we know, because most of them were not given official recognition by the law. All these elements tend to show that, rather than segmented cities, it is more appropriate to talk about a segmented approach to Ottoman cities. I will now examine studies that go beyond these problems and which propose a different understanding of imperial urban centres.

## **1.2 Towards a different perspective on Ottoman cities**

More recent studies have gone beyond such generalisations (Eldhem *et al.*, 1999; Smyrnelis, 1997; Yerasimos, 1992), suggesting that there is no such thing as *the*

*Ottoman city* or *the Islamic city* and that attempting to erect a ‘model’ city could only result in inaccuracies. Hence the necessity to distinguish each case and be careful of generalisations. Some studies have for instance shown that smaller cities were far less subjected to a strict division into ethnic and confessional areas, and that they had more cases of coexistence of various communities in a same quarter than bigger urban centres (Smyrnelis, 1997). More generally, these studies have highlighted two elements to explain the usual misconceptions about Ottoman cities and to help us understand the latter more accurately: the particular legislation and organisation of urban centres, and the complexity of imperial identities and inter-community sociabilities.

First, while rejecting stereotypes on Ottoman cities, it is necessary to recognise the extent to which Islamic and Oriental cities (stressing here the plurality of cases) were based on different conceptions of urban space than Western European ones, mostly due to differences between Muslim and Roman law (Yerosimos, 1992). Unlike cities based on Roman law, there was no *public space* in pre-19th century Ottoman cities. As seen in Chapter 1, a public space is a space submitted to public utility available to all citizens and marked both by social constraint (norms and rules, codes of property) and freedom (exchange of ideas, free circulation and contact). It is a place where social identities are formed and presented, and the place where ‘the public’ gets imagined, embodied and presented. Inspired by the Greek notion of *agora*, critical urban geographers, and in particular Mitchell (2003), consider public space as a site where democracy is possible. The places referred to as ‘public’ in imperial cities – such as the streets between houses – were not *public* in our modern sense of the word. They fell under the collective property of their adjoining residents: they were a space ‘in-between’ – a privatised common space. Urban legislation divided such spaces into two categories: open alleys and impasses. Though dead-ends are perceived negatively in modern Western conceptions of urban space because they make circulation impossible, Ottoman cities did permit mobility and exchange. They were to be accessed from common spaces (gates, bazaar, mosques...) to private ones. Hence they were characterised by an alveolar urban functioning: from the large street to the small one, and from the small street to the impasse. What seemed as a ‘maze-like’ system for Western eyes had its own logic, where an impasse meant a transition from an open space to an increasingly intimate and protected space. Moreover, the vision of Ottoman cities as being strictly divided into closed quarters is deeply influenced by the abstract Roman notion of *limit* (Yerasimos, 1992). While the limit – a zero-dimension line

separating two different juridical entities – is at the basis of Western land-law, this concept was replaced by one of *edges* in Muslim law – an area of space used in common by urban residents whose rights to it increase as it gets closer to their respective property. Contrary to images of division, chaos or opacity, Islamic cities were dynamic, with moving and never fixed boundaries, defined mostly by permeation.

Second, recent studies have shed new light on imperial identities and sociabilities, suggesting more complex relations between communities and subtler senses of identities than first thought. The exploration of local identities based on different kinds of sources and on individual accounts has emerged only fifteen years ago in academia, showing that identities were not only millet or community-related, but multi-faceted (Eldem *et al.*, 1999). Previous historical studies of Ottoman cities had left little space for individual. To Smyrnelis (1997), they gave the impression that individuals did not have any room for manoeuvre inside the community and stayed totally submitted to the rules imposed on him/her. Recent analyses suggest instead that the Ottoman society was not the totally compartmented society depicted by most narratives. Goffman (1994, cf. Barkey, 2005:16) argues that although the imperial pattern of vertical integration was reproduced in administration, ‘relations among communities flourished in the everyday interactions’. Dumont and Georgeon (1997) addressed this loophole by analysing inter-community *sociabilities* in the Ottoman Empire. Denouncing the long monopoly of a judicial approach in Ottoman historiography, they resituate individuals in their lived environment and focus on the places and informal events in which inter-community relations could happen. By concentrating on spaces located outside the family-state triangle (such as streets, fountains, cafés, markets or hammams), they show that these places were visited by a highly diverse population and allowed inter-community exchanges and encounters. Tamdogan-Abel (1997) similarly argues that the *han* was a kind of public space where people from various horizons would meet and exchange. Smyrnelis (1997) explains that Smyrne’s bazaars attracted many people, independently of their ethnic or religious belonging. By establishing itself as belonging to all the city’s inhabitants, the bazaar shaded the traditional division into quarters. Concentrating on special events, Georgeon (1997) argues that Ramadan may have been a time of tensions, but it was also a time of increased interpenetration between communities. With Dumont (1997), they conclude that the Ottoman Empire was much more ‘fluid’ and the communities more ‘open’ than usually assumed. They refer to a *convivance* to describe how members of different

communities shared the same ways of living, customs and sometimes even language. Smyrnelis (1997: 189-190) goes in the same direction when she writes, following a rather Lefebvrian approach that seems relevant to the study of Ottoman and post-Ottoman spaces such as Skopje, that 'flexibility [found] a spatial translation in the way in which urban spaces [were] appropriated, used, perceived and lived by the inhabitants... Much is forbidden but everything – or almost everything – is possible'.

These studies shed a new light on the image of divided cities. They suggest that ethnic, linguistic or religiously divisions in homogeneous quarters were not always the rule: many neighbourhoods were actually mixed. While 'Jewish', 'Armenian' or 'Muslim' quarters existed, they were not ghettos. Often closed at night, they opened in the day on a multi-faceted life (Dumont and Georgeon, 1997). Nahum (1997:166) even suggests that 'this topographical segregation, based on religious habits and food conveniences, was far less rigorous than in Western European medieval cities'. To Ilbert (1992), cities depended on two kinds of complementary networks: vertical networks uniting members of a same community – loyalties – and horizontal networks – solidarities – which linked individuals of different communities together, especially local notables. Most of these studies suggest that communities were less strictly defined and closer to each other than usually believed, and insist on the relative flexibility of the belonging to a community. In every community, a small number of families had social practices which were in total adequacy with the rules of the group and their life was mostly secluded and closed on the community (Smyrnelis, 1997). However, many individuals had a much more liberal approach to community belonging. Historians report many cases of 'changes' – people switching from one community to another. Smyrnelis (1997) compares communities as shifting groups, with porous borders, in which individuals get in and out and are able to make choices on a relatively free manner<sup>8</sup>. In Ottoman Macedonia, education determined nationality (Lory and Popovic, 1992): depending on the hazard of scholarships, a same family could have children with different cultural belonging – a 'Greek' son, another 'Bulgarian' and a third 'Serb'. Pragmatism rather than community bonds or ideological choices often governed ethnic and cultural belongings. Ottoman communities were more permeable than the Western modern understanding of the term leads to assume.

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<sup>8</sup> The author expresses more reserves about the Muslim and Jewish communities which, in her analysis of Smyrne, lived in a more secluded way than other communities.

### 1.3 Implications for this study

While recent studies have qualified the traditional perspective on imperial cities, none of them have gone as far as stating that these cities were truly cosmopolitan. Aiming at questioning the prevailing view of highly segregated cities, they analysed Ottoman cities as lived environments beyond crisis periods and focused on the pacific character of inter-community relations (Dumont and Georgon, 1997). However, most authors recalled that violence, even if symbolic, was never absent from the Ottoman system, whether it be through the legal inferiority of non-Muslims or the instability of social cohabitation. Humphrey (2012) questions the apparent paradox of a city – Odessa – famed for its cosmopolitanism and where violent pogroms nonetheless took place. Smyrnelis (1997) stresses the discrepancy between day and night lives, with the free circulation and rich communication of people during the day, and their withdrawal in separate and closed areas of town at night. Dumont and Georgeon's (1997) thorough analysis of Ottoman urban sociabilities lead them to emphasise the fragility of the Ottoman *vivre ensemble*. While the image of divided cities must be reviewed, Ottoman urban centres often expressed a model of 'unfinished' rather than real cosmopolitanism.

These conclusions have important implications for my study. First, since most studies of Ottoman cities focused on major urban centres and since smaller cities seem to have been less subjected to spatial division than bigger ones, we should be cautious not to draw too much generalisations from studies of other imperial cities. Similarly, as there is no 'typical' Ottoman city, the complexity of urban life in Ottoman Skopje should be analysed through a case-study research based on archival and testimonials analysis. Yet, this also implies not extrapolating from official documents and instead recognising that there is little information on less formal and official aspects of life in Ottoman Skopje, in particular intercommunity sociabilities. Second, it entails examining imperial Skopje as home to a specific legislation and organisation which departs from the Western European conception of urban space. This also implies being aware of the flexibility and pragmatism governing community belonging, which are not likely to appear in official documents and most historical accounts. Finally, it involves analysing Ottoman Skopje through a diachronic perspective, as a dynamic space which has evolved significantly in five centuries, and pay equal attention to crisis as non-crisis periods.



## **2 Skopje under the Ottoman rule**

In this section, I examine the geography, evolution and functioning of Skopje during the Ottoman Empire and confront it with the image constructed by official Macedonian historiography. I first give a short account of the history of Skopje from 1392 to the Tanzimat, the period I referred to as ‘Ottoman modernisation’, before reviewing the reasons why Ottoman Skopje may at first sight be seen as a divided city. I finally suggest a more accurate perspective on the city’s life during imperial rule.

Historical data and contemporary studies of Ottoman Skopje are lacking. This might be explained by the traumatic events Skopje experienced and which nearly destroyed it on several occasions (the 1555 and 1963 earthquakes; the 1689 great fire; numerous wars among which the Balkan Wars and the World Wars). Moreover, after the 1689 conquest and destruction of the city by the Austrian armies, Skopje became a small and poor provincial town (‘a big village’ to Stamenov and Čolović, 2003:32). It was only in the 19th century that the city expanded again and became famous as a major business centre<sup>9</sup>, and in 1945 that it was promoted to be capital of the new Yugoslav republic. Consequently, there have been few studies on this period which does not seem to have interested many historians. Besides, the influence of post-Ottoman politics on Macedonian historiography has resulted in the overlooking – not to say erasure – of the Ottoman period or its distortion in official versions of national memory. This is why caution is needed when using historical narratives and analyses of Ottoman Skopje.

### **2.1 Ottoman modernisation: a historical overview**

Skopje remained Ottoman for five centuries, during which the city experienced many changes. Macedonian historiography regards the end of the Ottoman period and start of the new nation-states as the beginning of the country’s and city’s modernisation process. It thus overlooks Skopje’s evolution from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, and especially the rupture presented by the Tanzimat in terms of urban planning. As I analyse the Tanzimat period in the next section, I concentrate here on the first centuries of Ottoman rule over the Macedonian city, the Ottoman stagnation of the city, but also its stagnation. The Ottoman conquest of Skopje, in 1392, was a rupture in the evolution of the city. Macedonian historians have often been quick to

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<sup>9</sup> Monastir was then considered the ‘cultural capital’ of the region.

characterise this period as one of ‘terror’ (Arsovski, 1971), marked by the ‘eviction’ of Christian Slavic populations from the city (Kačeva *et al.*, 2006). Without adhering to such views, it is legitimate to acknowledge the extent of the city’s transformation when it was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. From a former central place of Christianity for the Byzantine and, later, the Serbian Empires, the city quickly developed as a major Ottoman city in the newly acquired territories (Stamenov and Čolović, 2003). Skopje benefited from being part of the first Ottoman provinces to be organised in the Balkans, and rapidly grew in a major economic centre and military base.

Skopje’s Ottomanisation induced deep changes in the city’s ethnic composition and appearance. The Ottomans established the new urban centre on the left side of the river, on a vast field named Čair (*meadow* in Turkish). Muslim populations rapidly outnumbered the Christian communities in the new area and the whole city, this discrepancy increasing with time<sup>10</sup>. These populations were joined at the end of the 15th century by a great number of Spanish and Portuguese Jews<sup>11</sup>, who soon took an active part in the development of Skopje through business and craft. The city rapidly grew as an important commercial place which attracted traders from numerous Mediterranean cities who stayed in Skopje on a temporary or permanent basis, as with the colony of Dubrovnik merchants. In the middle of the 17th century, the city was composed of 70 neighbourhoods with about 16,000 permanent houses (Stamenov and Čolović, 2003). New elements of architecture and urban planning appeared. The Serbian medieval centre – a small and walled area on the Kale hill – progressively lost its role in favour of the downtown city. Monumental profane (hans, hammams or fountains) or sacred (mosques or medresas) buildings were erected, sometimes replacing Christian buildings. The construction of commercial buildings coincided with the development of handicrafts and shops, which marked the embryo of the typical Ottoman *Čaršija*. At the end of the 15th century, the *Čaršija* was a well-established business centre in the Balkans. Some buildings were constructed on the right side of the Vardar (among which the Burmalı mosque) and eventually led to the erection of the Stone Bridge. Skopje soon became an important cultural centre in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, with religious schools flourishing and poets settling in the city. In the mid-17th century,

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<sup>10</sup> There were 511 Muslim families in 1445 for 339 families, then a proportion of 717 / 302 in 1519. Historians indicate 53 Muslim neighbourhoods in the mid-16th century for only 14 Christian ones (Stamenov and Čolović, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> In 1544, there were already 38 Jewish families in the city (Stamenov and Čolović, 2003).

many visiting foreigners would refer to Skopje, the new seat of the Sandjak, as a big and developed centre, with 60,000 inhabitants, 120 mosques, 110 maktabas and 110 fountains (Stamenov and Čolović, 2003). However, the development of this typical Ottoman city would brutally be interrupted, with the Austrian conquest in 1689.

No longer after the Austrian troops entered Skopje, a great fire destroyed the city and killed many inhabitants. The Ottoman military catastrophe and chaotic situation led to the Christian uprising of the rebel Karposh, which was rapidly crushed by the Ottoman army. The return of the Ottoman ruler did not mean a better situation for the city, with Christian populations suffering severe retaliations. Skopje consisted of ruins and unorganised areas on the northern side of the Vardar. Its population mostly originated from Turkey. The city remained a small and poor provincial town, with no commercial importance, for the major part of the 18th century. With the plague epidemic striking its inhabitants in 1740, its population even decreased to 5,000 inhabitants, and what had once been the biggest city in the whole region was reduced to a dishevelled Ottoman provincial town. It was only with the Tanzimat that the city would rise from its ashes, a period which I will analyse in the next section.

## **2.2 Ottoman Skopje, a divided city?**

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century reforms, Skopje had many features in common with other cities of the Empire. I will review here the reasons why Skopje may, at first sight, be seen as a ‘typical’ Ottoman and fragmented city, before suggesting an alternative perspective on Ottoman urban life.

Like many Ottoman cities, pre-1689 Üsküb was separated into two different and separated zones: on the one hand, the administrative and economic areas, and, on the other hand, the residential neighbourhoods. The first area was developed on the space of the downtown city and organised around the Čaršija with the *bezisten* (covered market) at its core. It was above all a functional place. The Čaršija was concentrated important public buildings, such as the clock tower and the city’s medresas, with the han, the hammam and the mosque symbolizing the Islamic troika (Stamenov and Čolović, 2003). What might have appeared to be a maze-like plan actually functioned as rational zoning, based on a well-structured 17<sup>th</sup> century network of streets which connected the residential areas to the Čaršija as the city’s centre, towards which all streets led (Dojchinovski, 1997). The second area was constituted by the different mahallas,

developed around the Čaršija and used only as a place of living. The mahalla's location, far from the city's commercial centre, ensured that their inhabitants were preserved from the Čaršija's noises. The architecture of the mahalla was similar to that of most Ottoman cities: division into smaller areas, narrow streets bordered by high walls, houses enclosed from the outside and centred on interior gardens. We are far here from the definition of contemporary urban sociology, which views the street as the major component of urban space that ensures communications between the city's different zones and its inhabitants. Skopje's streets and impasses were not a place to go for a walk. They discouraged the entry of foreigners to the mahalla and permitted its control by the community.

Skopje bore, at first sight, the marks of the Empire's official approach to the management of cultural diversity. The Muslim / Christian division appeared in the division of labour: Skopje's guilds were divided by religion, with Muslim and Christian guilds dominating business, and only a small number of mixed guilds with double administration and press (Kačeva *et al.*, 2006). The different communities seemed to have precise activities and little room for manoeuvre: cobblers, bakers and butchers were Christian, while blacksmiths, barbers and tanners were Muslim (Arsovski, 1971). Heavy physical work was usually the lot of Gypsies (Kačeva *et al.*, 2006).

The most visible separation was the communities' repartition into different areas of the city, with successive waves of migration leaving major traces on the urban fabric. Migrants usually concentrated in one area in order to preserve their cultural specificities. These areas were called after their community or their place of provenance. One of Skopje's oldest colonies, the Jewish community, lived in *Evrejsko maalo*, i.e. the Jewish mahalla, on the left side and centred on the Kaal Hadash synagogue. Skopje's religious communities lived in separate neighbourhoods with their own facilities, except for the Čaršija. Most Muslims lived in Karadag or Krnjevo maalo, on the northern side, where the clock tower and important mosques were located. They had their own cemeteries, separated from the Christian, the Jewish and the Gypsy cemeteries (called *imoiria*). Until the late 19th century, Muslim houses differed from Christian ones: the former were larger and remained ground, with, in rich families, a gender separation into two different buildings, while the latter had often two floors and a veranda (Kačeva *et al.* 2006). Skopje was home to different Muslim (Turk, Albanian, Roma, Cherkess and Tatar) and Christian (Macedonian, Serb, Vlach, Greek and minority Roma) communities. This group distinction was roughly reflected in urban

space. Most Vlachs lived in Vlashko maalo, on the right side of the river. The Roma community lived in Gazi Mentash, also called Cigansko maalo ('Gypsy maalo') and Xhadzhi Seledinovo until the 1876 Turkish-Serbian war and the arrival of waves of refugees. They then settled in Topaana, at the city's periphery, which became a major Roma area (a feature it has preserved today), especially after their ousting from Gazi Mentash during the interwar period.

It seems hard to identify any kind of cosmopolitanism here. Most individuals could live their whole life secluded in their respective neighbourhood, speaking only their community's language and interacting with 'foreigners' only at the Čaršija – outside of which women were even more isolated than men. At first sight, it is true that Ottoman Skopje might have appeared as a divided city or a sum of strongly identified territories rather than a unified city, lacking social bonds outside the community, with partitioning of the urban physical structure, and the exclusionary appropriation of space by different groups. However, I will now suggest that the lived reality was quite different. Two factors question the image of a strictly partitioned city: first, the permeability of communities and, second, the evolutions Skopje experienced during this long imperial rule. As a crossroads in the Balkans, the city was not only an area through which migrations passed, but also a place where groups gathered, changing the structure of the city and themselves in the process.

First, we should be cautious of anachronistic ideas on religious and/or ethnic divisions which do not correspond to the reality of the lived environment at a certain period. While Muslim and Christian communities in Ottoman Skopje are often seen as having very different cultural habits and lifestyles, a poor Christian had actually more in common with a poor Muslim than with a rich Christian. For many centuries, the workers' lifestyle extended the belonging to a specific community and did not change much. This is explained by the relative social and cultural permeability between groups and their constant interaction in mixed areas. The Čaršija was a major meeting place: before 1689 and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Skopje was an important economic centre, where traders from various cultures and places interacted on a regular basis.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> At the end of the 19th century, Skopje's Čaršija had 1,150 shops and its merchants were Arab, Jewish, Armenian, Greek, Venetian or Serbian – to cite only a few (Stamenov and Čolović, 2003)

Second, a close observation of archived documents suggests that the city's mahallas were not as strictly divided as they seemed. Skopje had many mixed neighbourhoods. Even if Jews were concentrated in the Jewish mahalla, they were also present in other mahallas. The historic area of settlement, Čair, was home to Orthodox and Muslim populations. Even the so-called 'Vlach maalo' was also populated by Turkish officials. Finally, most Roma neighbourhoods were populated by both Muslim and Christian Roma groups (Kačeva and al., 2006). This permeability is assessed by the presence of Orthodox churches in non-Christian neighbourhoods, such as the church of St Dimitrius, built in 1690 in the Jewish mahalla. Soon after the Ottoman conquest, the construction of Christian buildings was again allowed and, in 1543, the church of the Holy Saviour was built in the Čaršija. These elements suggest that the Empire's tolerance towards non-Muslim communities was greater than usually thought. There was no absolute segregation in Ottoman Skopje.

Skopje was also not a static entity. It experienced many changes, especially in the last century of Ottoman rule. The successive migrations altered both the spatial distribution of its populations and their interactions. While the most important waves of migration occurred in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there had already been some movements of population which influenced the development of the city before. The Muslim community's internal heterogeneity increased in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the establishment of new Muslim populations. It is in this period that the Albanians – or 'Arnauts' as they were called by the Ottoman ruler – settled in Skopje. All of them were Ghegs, but not all of them were Muslim – not to mention also the Orthodox and Catholic Albanians. Many Catholic Ghegs opted for Islam when they settled in Skopje: religious conversion (especially to Islam) was a common practice in Ottoman lands, with the complexity it added to the already convoluted cultural make-up of the Empire. Such migrations brought about some processes of fusion, inter-crossing and blurring of intergroup barriers which defy any attempt at categorisation.

These aspects of life in Skopje during the Ottoman Empire suggest that the image of a divided city is inaccurate. Skopje may have been home to different communities, but its mahallas were not exclusively monoethnic. Similarly, communities were more porous and intercommunity sociabilities more developed than usually depicted by Macedonian historiography. This indicates that Skopje's processes of divisions should not be attributed to the Ottoman period, but that they most likely emerged after the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I will now analyse the changes occurred during the

Tanzimat, a series of reforms which altered the organisation of the city, in particular its spatial development and intercommunity relations.

### **3 Skopje amidst European modernisation**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century, and especially its second half, was a rupture in the history of Ottoman urban centres. According to Macedonian historiography, it is only with the end of the Ottoman ‘yoke’ that Skopje entered modernity and started to get rid of its old spatial organisation. The interwar period is seen as a golden age which marked the start of Skopje’s *Europeanisation*. It is true that it is in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that new planning rules gradually altered the traditional outlook of imperial cities, with some cities even almost reconstructed from scratch. Without denying the extent of the newly independent states’ participation in this urban evolution, we should be careful not to attribute all the changes to the new governments and thus deny the changes already realised by the Ottoman Empire. A more thorough examination indeed offers new perspectives on the apparent decline and failed reform of the Empire. The wave of modernisation for which the new nation-states claim authorship was actually initiated under and by the Ottoman government, even if it took a different dimension after the fall of the Empire. This attempt to ‘modernise’ the Empire was different from the first Ottoman modernisation because it massively incorporated foreign – i.e. Western – influence. This is the reason why I refer to it as a *European* period of modernisation, in contrast with the *Ottoman* modernisation that occurred in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. This does not mean that this process was governed by European governments, but that European principles of urban planning, design and architecture were applied to Ottoman cities. This process was not initiated by the new nation-states, but by imperial rule.

#### **3.1 Towards a new conception of the city**

The *Tanzimat* (‘ordering’ or ‘rationalisation’) are a series of reforms instituted by the Ottoman rule in 1839 and stretching over the following decades. It brought radical changes in the conception and development of urban space, and its spirit can even be described as ‘Haussmanian’ before its time (Dumont and Georgeon, 1992) because of

the precocity of its ideas and the efficiency of their realisation (Yerasimos, 1992)<sup>13</sup>. What also deserves particular attention is its relationship to Western European conceptions and practices. The Tanzimat were both an introduction to and the result of new ways of inhabiting and conceiving the city which promoted:

the appointment of municipal bodies and local services agencies; the creation of public spaces; the planting of infrastructures such as water pipes, public and private lighting, sewers, communications and public transport; also the installation of railway and new port facilities; and the imposition of building alignments and regulations intended to provoke a progressive transformation of the urban fabric. Thus geometric order would be introduced into the informal layout of cities, public and private space for new needs provided, and new standards of sanitation and fire prevention applied. (Yerasimos, 1993:252)

This startling call for totally new planning principles can be explained by two factors. First, it was a way to fight Western supremacy by resorting to its very instruments. The idea was to use both the culture and the techniques of the West to modernise the Ottoman state and society. This meant modelling cities after the European ones – or after the image of the latter. Second, the Tanzimat was a way to restore the authority of the central state. While the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century had been marked by its erosion, its recovery in the 1830s was remarkable. This also went along with the growth of the influence of the West. Cole (1981) recalls that the 19<sup>th</sup> century coincided with an intensification of the Empire's integration into the capitalist world system. Paradoxically, at the same time as the Empire's international influence was diminishing, its internal authority increased (Yerasimos, 1992). Westernising the Empire was therefore a way to establish the state's authority by increasing its capacity of intervention in the Ottoman society. This strengthening of power did not rest only on political and security reasons, but also had financial grounds. Greater state interference also meant a better assessment of taxes and more money in the Treasury coffers. As long as the power of local communities was not challenged, the prerogative of their respective leaders over urban territories remained considerable, and the central government could not do much to impose an order which would have enabled a unification of the city under the control of a local state administration. With the Tanzimat, the government not only expressed its will to overcome this lack of authority,

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<sup>13</sup> These aspects should be qualified for Balkans cities, where it took a longer time for these measures to be implemented.



but it successfully imposed its power over urban centres. This put an end to the city as a sum of territories in the hand of communities, and meant the definitive adoption of Western urban planning as a new model for Ottoman cities.

The Tanzimat marked the birth of an urban consciousness among Ottoman citizens. From the 1840s onward, the new urban planning rules were a way to answer the growing aspirations of a new type of social class in the Ottoman Empire, the elites, regardless of their ethnic or religious belonging (Dumont and Georgeon, 1992). This new type of elite had an increasingly deep sense of the urban environment, expressed in their call for a public space in which the *individuals* – and not the members of millets or communities – would play a major role (Dumont and Georgeon, 1997). They did not share cultural and confessional origins, but social and professional characteristics and a new ‘urban awareness’ (Yerolympos, 1992).

The Tanzimat encouraged and promoted the relative desertion of traditional networks. Ottoman urban reforms actively took part in the development of new modes of living and appropriating the city outside the old schemes of ethnic and religious differentiations. They enabled the formation of new urban institutions, such as municipalities in bigger cities, where Muslims and non-Muslims were taking part, schools which enabled new solidarities, and the printed press. Newspapers played a major role in promoting the city as the bearer of a specific culture and a new ‘public space’ going past ethnic and religious differences. The city was seen as a unifying factor at a time where dislocation was increasingly threatening the Empire (Yerolympos, 1997). The city and the new ‘spirit’ it conveyed were indeed the unique theme likely to create points of convergence between ethnic and religious groups (Yerolympos, 1992). The alteration of the traditional networks of the millets and the communities also signed the progressive secularization of the Ottoman society. New networks, such as cultural circles, learned societies or clubs, also actively participated in this phenomenon (Dumont and Georgeon, 1997). The transformation of the nature of ethnic identity was also due to the Empire’s incorporation into the capitalist system (Cole, 1981). Since the development of a modern export economy could be inhibited by the traditional organisation of economy along ethnic lines, the new elites’ aspirations opposed this cultural division of labour.

Throughout the 19th century, the city was changed into an instrument of ethnic assimilation. The result was the progressive disappearance of community divisions in

urban space, replaced by new social divides (Yerolympos, 1992). By choosing to leave the ethnic quarter for developing mixed areas, such as in Salonica, Smyrne or Istanbul, the elites were symbolically opting for the notability rather than the community (Dumont and Georgeon, 1997; Mazower, 2005). Supported by new neighbourly relations, leisure socialising and business affairs, this increasing connection of the highest classes of the Ottoman society progressively spread to the other classes. Spatially, this meant the opening of the traditional community quarters and the loosening of ethnic or religious urban divisions.

However, with the changes brought by the Great Eastern crisis<sup>14</sup> and the progressive dislocation of the Empire, the modernisation of Ottoman society remained unfinished. Moreover, this process affected cities in an unequal manner. Dumont and Georgeon (1997) noticed that modernisation came along with a new division of Istanbul between its modern and its old parts, with the latter almost left aside. They qualify the idea of a ‘conquest of power by urban elites’: the modernisation of urban practices was not conducive to a real ‘community of interests’ which could have led to a common management by the higher social classes of the city affairs which, in general, remained in the hands of the state. Yet, the process brought many transformations that would later be resumed by the new nation-states, although in different ways and with various results. By redeeming the role of the Ottomans in the history of the Balkans at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, recent studies enable us to understand the Empire in a more complex and subtle way than the national historiographies usually tend to do.

### **3.2 A ‘Westernised’ Skopje?**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century signed the ‘rebirth’ of Üsküb. This ‘renaissance’ was due, not only to the new urban planning, but to the political, social and economic reforms adopted by the Empire.

Before the actual start of the Tanzimat, the central government had already passed new laws, whose impact was as important as the new urban legislation for Skopje. The most significant reform, along with the suppression of the janissary army in 1828, was the proclamation of the equality of all citizens before the law, the freedom of faith and gathering, and the guarantee of property for all. These measures gave non-

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<sup>14</sup> Between 1875 and 1881, several uprisings and wars occurred in the Balkans, marking the beginning of the Ottoman Empire’s dissolution.

Muslim populations new rights – for instance, the right for Christian to build churches – which would eventually overwhelm the balance of power in Skopje. These political changes, followed rapidly by economic measures advantageous for merchants, impacted a lot on the development of Skopje's Čaršija. The city also benefited from the economic blockade imposed on the French Empire: Skopje's location on the 'white path' (cotton from the Near East) resulted in a commercial 'boom' for the city. The relative emancipation of the Christian populations and the intensification of commercial activities drew many rural dwellers of neighbouring villages to settle in Skopje.

The city's ethnic composition progressively changed and the influence of Slavic populations was felt in the Čaršija where, in the middle of the century, most of the commercial organisations and guilds were in the hands of Christian traders – the budding young bourgeoisie of Skopje. The cultural emancipation of Slavic populations from the Ottoman ruler and the Hellenic patriarchate, leant a lot on this new class of citizen. The city soon became a famous commercial and cultural place, which welcomed foreign consulates. The 19<sup>th</sup> century also marked a turning-point in the story of local cross-community relations. In 1865, Skopje was already registering 21,800 inhabitants, a number that would reach 33,194 in 1889, thanks to the further developments permitted by the construction of the Salonica-Skopje-Mitrovica railway in 1873 and the Belgrade-Skopje line in 1888 – a major shift in the history of the city. With the construction of the new station on the right bank of the Vardar, Skopje expanded its traditional centre – until then concentrated on the left side and along the river Serava – to this part of the city which would soon be developed as the 'modern European city' (Kačeva and al., 2006) where new migrants would settle. Skopje did not wait the end of the Ottoman period to develop on the right side. Moreover, while this side is usually seen as the cradle of the 'Macedonian' – understood as Slavic and Orthodox – city, it was at this time populated mostly by Muslim refugees.

This period marked the end of the compact and coherent urban form organised around the Čaršija, and the departure from the Oriental appearance of the city. As the administrative centre of the Kosovo Vilayet, the city progressively developed into two different parts. The left side preserved its traditional Ottoman character, while the right side gave the opportunity to apply new urban principles. The first orthogonal organisation was applied to Madžir maalo in 1878 and, soon, new architectural elements

would appear in the city. The economic force of the Christian population led to the development of a 'Macedonian' school of architecture, which took its roots in the classical Hellenistic culture (Stamenov and Čolović, 2003). The architecture of public and residential buildings moved away from the traditional Ottoman model, welcoming a mix of neo-classicist, baroque and other 'European' inspiration. In the Čaršija, new and bigger complexes progressively replaced the small and old shops and, already in the late 19th century, the majority of the new buildings were constructed after the 'Macedonian' school of architecture. When Ottoman rule ended in Macedonia, Skopje was a city of 47,000 inhabitants, whose architecture was a patchwork of oriental and modern values and where the traditional Ottoman norms were pushed aside in favour of the new, 'European', model. The departure from the traditional city therefore happened much earlier than assumed by the detractors of the Ottoman Empire.

The Great Eastern crisis caused new migrations of Muslim populations in Skopje, with refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and other territories lost by the Ottoman Empire. The *Muhadzhiri* or *Madzhiri* (a diverse populations of Turks, Albanians, Bosniaks, Pomaks, Čerkez, Tatars, etc.) first settled with other Muslim populations in Čerkesko maalo (the 'Cherkess neighbour'), Čair and Topaana, but then moved to the right side of the river, close to Vlashko maalo, and founded Madzhir maalo. This area, formed around Boshnjački alley (the 'Bosniak' alley) and now part of the Municipality of Centre, later expanded across the railroad ways. The changes brought to Skopje's neighbourhoods were also an expression of a phenomenon new to the Ottoman city: with the Tanzimat lifting the ban on non-Muslim migrations, rural populations came to work in Skopje. Most of these Slavic and Christian immigrants settled in new areas on the right side, such as Novo maalo or Čivči maalo, next to Vlashko maalo and Madzhir maalo (*figure 7*). This phenomenon of local migration profoundly altered the layout of communities in Skopje. It brought in new kinds of differentiation based not that much on ethnic/cultural than social belonging. New divides among Skopje's population progressively replaced or, at least, overlaid the traditional ethnic and religious ones.

With the development of the Čaršija and the rise of rich and prominent Christian traders – Skopje's Slavic bourgeoisie – a new class emerged, which had much more in common with the Ottoman Muslim officials than with the growing stratum of Christian workers and immigrants from the countryside. In the early 20th century, socialist groups made their first appearance in Skopje, influenced also by the 1908 Young Turks

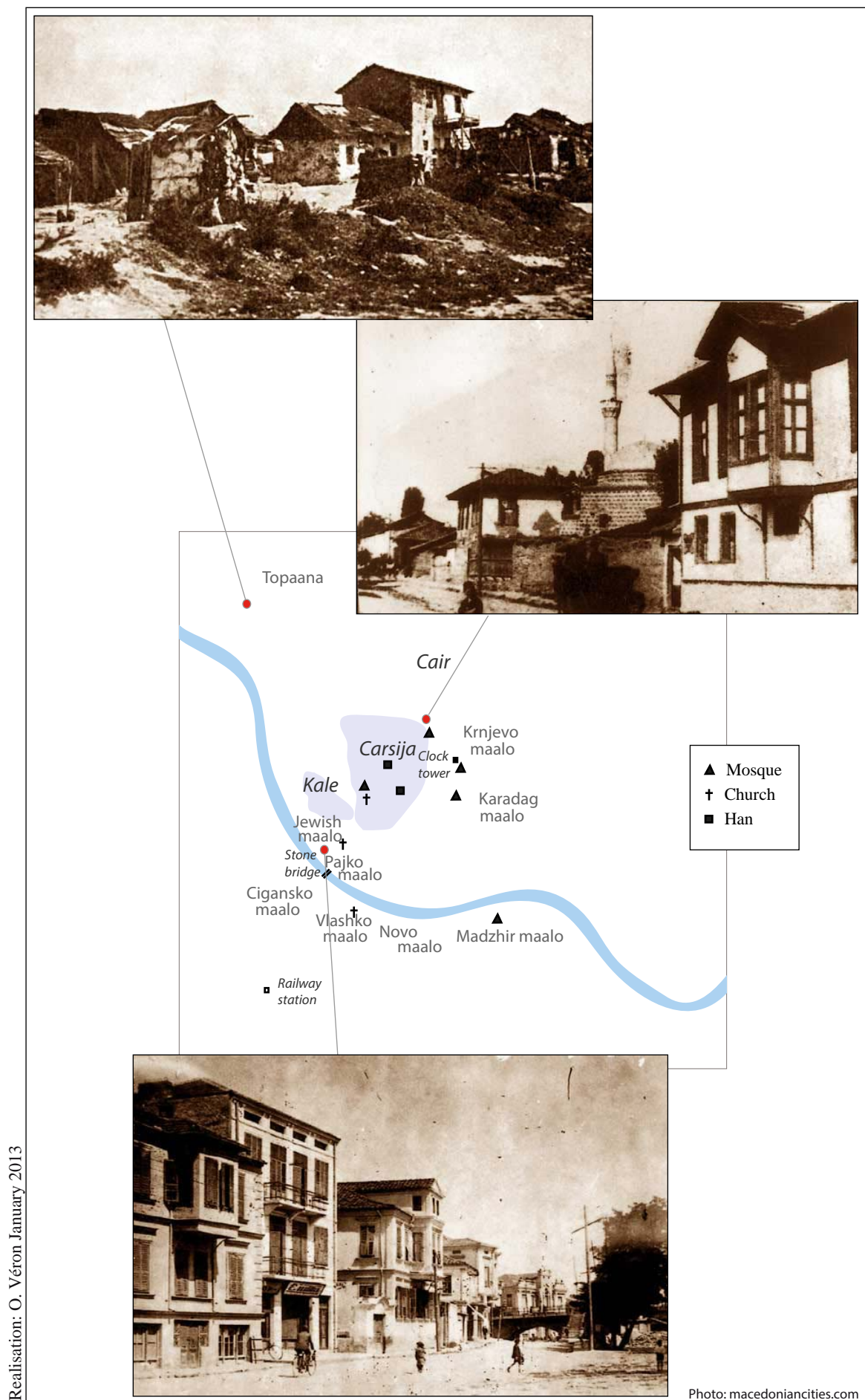


Figure 7: Skopje's neighbourhoods at the end of the 19th century

Revolution. Internal relocations by Skopjani became motivated to a larger extent by social considerations than by ethnic and religious ones: for instance, many inhabitants living on the left side moved to the right side because of the lower prices of the land outside the old city and in the outskirts of Skopje. Such migrations deeply affected the traditional Ottoman organisation of space. At the beginning of the 20th century, Skopje may have preserved many features typical of other Ottoman cities, but five centuries of constant migrations, exchanges and interaction with the outside made it different from the 15<sup>th</sup> century city. This invalidates the theory of 'the' Ottoman city as the primary cause for today's divisions.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presented and discussed a diachronic overview of the Ottoman period, in order to understand the traces left by the Ottoman city in Skopje's current organisation of space. Skopje's present spatial and cultural divisions are commonly explained by the idea of Ottoman urban divisions. However, this view is misleading and has to be qualified. As I have argued, it is true that, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city was home to processes of differentiation which affected its space and the distribution repartition of its populations, whether through the imperial difference of status based on religion, the existence of separate quarters, or the absence of an authentic community of interest which would have raised an 'urban awareness' above any other elements of identity. In a sense, Ottoman Skopje matched many of the criteria of divided cities, as seen in Chapter 1. Yet, Skopje was also an environment where communities could interact and mix on a daily basis, where different social classes' interests would meet and eventually predominate over ethnic and religious belongings, and where, above all, identity barriers were more blurred and permeable than has been thought. Ottoman Skopje may not have been a truly cosmopolitan city, but neither was it a divided city.

Rather than trying to explain today's divisions by dating them back to the Ottoman Empire, I emphasise two important aspects of the functioning of modern Skopje. First, while the Ottoman city had some elements of division, these divisions were different from present ones. Throughout the Ottoman period, elements of identification (language, ethnicity, culture, religion, social status, place of living, etc.) were much vaguer and more fluctuating than today. Also, the categories with which we analyse Ottoman society are more enclosing than they were at this time. This explains

why the actual divisions were less pronounced and more porous than it ‘officially’ and retrospectively seems. Second, there is a difference in nature between Ottoman *public space* and our modern understanding of the term. The Čaršija was a space of interaction and exchange, but it was not an authentic public space in the sense of an *agora*. No community of interest or awareness of the city as a unifying whole was expressed there. When commercial transactions ended at night, people went home to their respective neighbourhoods and resumed their secluded existence. Streets were not *public* as understood in critical urban geography: they were not a place where ideas could be exchanged, but rather a privatised common space. This explains more of the conception and organisation of space than the alleged heritage of a divided city. I will now move on to analyse in more detail 20<sup>th</sup> century Skopje and discuss the alleged role of certain events and politics in the formation of the urban divisions that are claimed to exist today.

## – CHAPTER 4 –

# THE BIRTH OF A DIVIDED CITY?

Despite their apparent break with the past, the current urban transformations in Skopje are not new. It is not the first time that the city has been given a facelift to mark a rupture with a previous period or political regime. The current revamping of the city has much in common with another period: the post-Ottoman era. Both periods share the same propensity towards state intervention in urban space and the same willingness to erase the traces left by the previous regime, as well as a common set of values. The post-WWI Kingdom of Yugoslavia put all its energy into demarcating Skopje from its Ottoman past and remodelling it as a new, modern centre in the region. Today, Skopje is a city where the urban authorities are trying to erase all traces of the Socialist and Ottoman pasts. It is not by chance that the current project for the city centre took much of its architectural inspiration from the interwar period<sup>1</sup>, which has been considered as a golden age for Skopje. The period is presented in Macedonian history schoolbooks as a successful transition from the Ottoman Empire, in which Skopje eventually lost its status of ‘Islamic city’, becoming a modern ‘European’ and Christian city. In this narrative, the ‘positive’ changes brought by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were unfortunately not pursued because of the Second World War and, later, the socialist planning paradigm.

The dominant Macedonian ethno-nationalist narrative<sup>2</sup> sees socialism as having done nothing to put an end to the city’s Ottoman-inherited divisions, except perhaps hushing them up until the global rebirth of ethnic tensions at the end of the 1980s. This position is a stumbling block between the partisans of current urban planning and those who deplore the way post-1963 planning is brought into disrepute – from Yugonostalgics to former socialists and now supporters of the post-independence social

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<sup>1</sup> This influence went as far as deciding to reconstruct interwar buildings and monuments destroyed in 1963, as I will analyse in Chapter 5.

<sup>2</sup> I refer here to the nationalism promoted by the party in power, the VMRO, which I present extensively in Chapter 5.



democratic party, the *Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija* or SDSM<sup>3</sup>. In both cases, the Macedonian narrative, which is supported via state institutions, school programs and public museums, is advantageous for current elites, regardless of their political affiliation, since it transfers responsibility for urban divisions to the Ottoman Empire alone, and exempts them from being liable for the current situation. However, as I will show, this ‘accommodating’ narrative needs to be revised.

The aim of this chapter is to show that, contrary to the Macedonian ethno-nationalist narrative, Skopje’s variegated urban form did not take root in the Ottoman period, but between the World Wars. I argue that these divisions are the result of the dominant strand in the Yugoslav Kingdom’s urban politics, which sought to break with a seemingly backward, ‘Oriental’ city to establish a new ‘modern’ Christian one and which, by doing so, created the image of a two-faceted city. Although the Socialist regime was aware of this legacy, its ostensibly neutral planning strategy<sup>4</sup> did nothing to alleviate the incipient dividing tendencies of the time. Instead, it *de facto* ratified a process that had begun before the Second World War.

In order to make this argument, section one addresses the ambiguities of post-Ottoman urban politics in Skopje and the responsibility of the urban authorities of the time for the development of segregation. Section two then examines the ideas and values underlying socialist urban planning in general and in particular in relation to Skopje, where a major earthquake in 1963 destroyed a large part of the urban framework and seemingly offered an opportunity to rebuild the city almost from scratch as a symbol of modernity and unity amidst the Cold War. Section three discusses in more detail the failure of post-earthquake planning in addressing urban dividing processes and lessening the image of a divided city.

This chapter presents original findings on Skopje based on archival material, including the 1965 and 1985 Master Plans, and the 1965 *Social Survey*<sup>5</sup>, as well as original documents provided by the Museum of City of Skopje and by some Macedonian colleagues. I also referred to a small number of secondary sources previously unused outside Macedonia, although to be considered with much caution because of their lack of references and precise data to support their assertions. Despite

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed presentation of the SDSM, see Chapter 5.

<sup>4</sup> I refer here Bollens’s (1998a, 1998b, 2002) distinction of urban political strategies (cf. Chapter 1).

<sup>5</sup> Основен Урбанистички План (1965), Основен План на Град Скопје. Изменување И Дополнување (1985) and Извештај од Социјалниот Предглед (1965).

being an academic work of interest, Home's 2006 paper on post-earthquake Skopje – the only non-Macedonian academic document I could find on the topic – also lacks precise references and it is sometimes hard to discern whether his assertions are based on primary sources or only on the 1970 UNDP book, *Skopje's Resurgent*, or even on interviews. Besides, these studies are based on the idea of Skopje as a historically divided city. In this chapter, I argue against this inaccurate narrative by shedding light on the processes at work during the interwar and the socialist period.

## **1 The ambiguity of Westernisation in Skopje**

The 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of many new nation-states in the Balkans<sup>6</sup>, which sought to establish their authority by demarcating themselves from the Ottoman Empire with, in particular, the creation and dissemination of a sense of national identities which was foreign to imperial rule. This wave of state formation was in general followed by modernisation projects launched by new elites who were prompt to appropriate progress realised by former regimes for themselves. As opposed to the countryside, urban centres were still home to a majority of Turkish and Muslim communities and stood as symbols of imperial domination. This is why the remaking of Balkan cities was at the heart of the nationalist programmes of the new regimes. Here I will present the approach chosen by most of the new regimes to deal with their Ottoman urban pasts: the *tabula rasa*, which meant the removal of all 'Oriental' traces and their replacement by new architectural and urban forms. I then discuss the ambivalences of this new urban politics and its principles. I finally examine in more detail their application and consequences for the post-Ottoman urban landscape of Skopje.

### **1.1 The *tabula rasa* approach**

'Modernising' the national territory had functional and practical motives for the newly independent states, but it also had an ideological background. While imperial cities had benefited from the Tanzimat, many of them – especially the small and medium-sized centres, such as Skopje – had undergone few changes. The new states' economic and social transformations had to be supported by new functional settings, in particular in

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<sup>6</sup> The Kingdom of Greece in 1821; the Principality of Bulgaria in 1878 and then Kingdom of Bulgaria in 1908; the Principality of Albania in 1913; and the Principality of Serbia in 1817, recognised as independent in 1878 and which became the Kingdom of Serbia in 1882.

urban space. The remaking of Balkan cities was seen by the new officials as a way to express the modernisation of the state and implement its policies. Modernisation was conceived as a total break with the past: everything Ottoman was considered a reminder of foreign rule, ethnic and religious oppression and social and economic retrogression, and had to be erased. According to Yerolympos (1993: 242-243) writing about Greece:

through town planning, city space [...] was laid out to promote, accommodate and support the emergence of an urban way of life; and also proclaim the existence of patronising, dynamic central state and a society which had to be modernised by ridding itself of all ‘oriental’ trace [...] [ending up] in effacing traditional characteristics from practically all cities in the mainland.

As most of the new capital cities, such as Athens or Sofia, had for long been provincial cities of a rather small size, or, as in the case of Belgrade, had been almost entirely destroyed during the Austro-Ottoman wars, the new nation-states focused on their reconstruction to establish their authority and symbolically mark the seat of the national leadership. These efforts were driven by a will to get closer to the models promoted in Western Europe and meant a complete renunciation – and hence, denunciation – of the traditional patterns of urban development. In most cases, urban space was included in new plans as if nothing had previously existed. The *tabula rasa* ideology meant the destruction of existing buildings that did not fit with the plans. As a result of active ‘de-Islamization’ (Therborn, 2009) or ‘de-Ottomanisation’ (Lory, 1985), Sofia lost most of its imperial legacy in only a few years. As shown by Lory (1985), the destruction of old neighbourhoods and of their own houses urged many Turks to emigrate, and the city also lost most of its Ottoman symbols – clock tower, hans, mosques and so on.

However, not all urban centres experienced this level of demolition. Some cities were spared, with Ottoman town design maintained, but for varying reasons. First, the new states lacked the financial resources to rebuild all their cities from scratch. They rather focused on major and visible urban centres, such as their capitals. In smaller cities, they sometimes combined old areas with newly constructed ones. Second, while the *tabula rasa* approach usually dominated in the years following independence, it did often leave space for more realistic and respectful policies seeking to conform to local conditions. In Bulgaria, a law was passed at the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to assure better inclusion of local heritage into urban planning. This explains why, except for Sofia, the Ottoman legacy was better preserved in Bulgaria than elsewhere in the

Balkans. Third, in places where Muslims retained powerful positions, at least numerically, Ottoman heritage was considered part of the local identity and, even if the new Slavic and Orthodox states favoured Westernisation, they did not dare totally rid them of the 'Oriental' legacy. This explains why cities such as Sarajevo, Prizren and, in Macedonia, Bitola and Skopje, preserved their traditional characteristics for many years.

## **1.2 National or Western modernisation?**

The waves of Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian independences took on a twofold aspect: as the new states sought to demarcate themselves from each other and to affirm their own identity, they tried to draw closer to the West, by adopting Western European models of development. This was particularly visible in urban planning.

In Serbian cities, state consolidation was undertaken by combining the promotion of national identity with the implementation of Western forms and principles whose adoption was seen as potentially conducive to a total change of lifestyles. New and old cities were remodelled after European norms, as interpreted and defined by local elites. As Therborn (2009) shows, a new geometrical layout of the city centre was generally adopted, with 'rational', hierarchical street patterns and the introduction of public spaces, along with architectural inspirations from Renaissance, Empire, Late Rococo and Art Nouveau movements. 'Europeanisation' became synonymous with 'civilisation', and 'modernisation' was identified with necessity and regularity (Krasteva, 2005). Most new urban plans were the work of foreign planners and architects. Experts from Western Europe and Russia (at this time, steeped in French influence) not only brought with them new technologies, but a very different aesthetic than the national 'Renaissance' style. New state buildings were erected, such as royal palaces, libraries or parliament buildings. Where states lacked financial means, they revised old buildings in an imagined European style. Sofia's former *konak*, the Ottoman governor's residence, was turned into a royal palace, by drawing from 18<sup>th</sup> century French castles and Viennese baroque. Short after the 1917 great fire, Salonica was reconstructed according to a plan designed by a French architect, Ernest Hébrard, who redesigned the city in the spirit of classical French urban planning (Darques, 2000; Mazower, 2005). In Romania, new plans made by foreign experts entirely redrew cities, following ideals which had nothing to do with the local traditions and landscapes.

This Europeanisation was ambiguous. Fisher (1963) argues that, in the case of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, city planning was led by the desire to completely break with the past and create purely 'Yugoslav' cities. The idea of creating centres of national leadership dominated the post-liberation policies in every country of the region. The relations between urban planning and nation-building were clearly established. To Yerolympos (1993), the new national identities implied a focus on elements that separated the peoples who had lived next to each other for centuries, and the minimisation of common traditions and local particularities. Everything local was to be effaced by centralised planning policies as a reminder of both the Oriental and Balkan 'backwardness', and a regional and small-scale identity was promoted in every post-Ottoman country. Yet, this new 'national' identity often lacked the historical legacy needed to establish its legitimacy without being contested by neighbouring states. Rather than grounding itself in local history, Western history and traditions were borrowed in an attempt to anchor an already established narrative, which was itself foreign to the region.

In most Balkan cities, the transformation of the physical environment was directed by clear political choices which used urban planning and architecture as a tool in furthering their ideas. The Ottomans had already started the modernisation process and many cities kept some Oriental characteristics, but the post-independence changes were considerable and carried more than aesthetic considerations. As Yerolympos argues (1993, 1998), town planning was meant to re-establish the long-lost link to Western civilisation and underline the continuity with cherished periods of ancient times. New planning principles and paradigms were also a catalyst for deeper social and economic changes, which transferred urban space from the control of traditional communities to that of the state and new capitalist powers.

### **1.3 Skopje under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia**

These shifts took particular form in Skopje. 'Modernisation' began before the end of the Ottoman rule, but the city still retained much of its traditional character. Although the 'westernisation' of Skopje had been the local elites' battle cry throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the 1890 urban plan did not distance itself much from the traditional Ottoman city. Skopje's main activities were still defined within the area of the Čaršija and around the Kale fortress, and the street pattern kept its irregular features determined by

topology rather than geometry. Cadastral lines concerned only major streets and the most distinctive linear element, the railroad, was on the outskirts of Skopje. Moreover, residential areas – the traditional mahalla – were still not included in formal urban planning and were only reported on the plan as urban fields.

Although Skopje was not promoted to the status of capital of an independent state<sup>7</sup> at the end of the Ottoman rule, it experienced a twofold process of de-Ottomanisation and nationalist modernisation – or ‘Serbianisation’. Due to the late withdrawal of the Empire from the Macedonian region, the effort to remodel the city was informed by the evolution of international planning ideas. Yerolympos (1993) suggests that the new sanitary and aesthetic principles that prevailed after WWI in the Balkans were less ‘brutal’ than that of the immediate post-independence. Turks were not pushed into leaving the city and most Ottoman neighbourhoods were preserved. Instead of opting for a *tabula rasa* approach, the new rulers expanded the city outside its traditional perimeter and started the construction of a ‘new’ Skopje in an under-developed area: the right side of the Vardar. While the southern bank would later replace the Čaršija as the city centre, it was still considered an area of residential expansion for new migrants in 1912 – a situation which would dramatically change under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

In 1912, Skopje was still mainly concentrated on the left side. The interwar years solidified the association of the right side with the modern European city in the new urban imaginary – an image which is still current today. For the first time in its history, Skopje was separated into two parts: the old ‘traditional’ Ottoman city and the new Yugoslav ‘modern’ city. Although this organisation was neither sudden nor marked by the erection of a physical barrier such as a wall, it was not a natural process led by the growth of informal neighbourhoods due to urban migrations. This new distribution was due to new urban policies which, by seeking a new centre for the city, consciously privileged the right over the left side of the Vardar. Although there was no destruction of the former Ottoman neighbourhoods, most of them were only poorly included in new planning strategies and they were left to dereliction. The interwar period was therefore marked by an attempt by central and local government to divide the city, both mentally and physically, into an old Ottoman part on the one hand, and a new and modern European city on the other.

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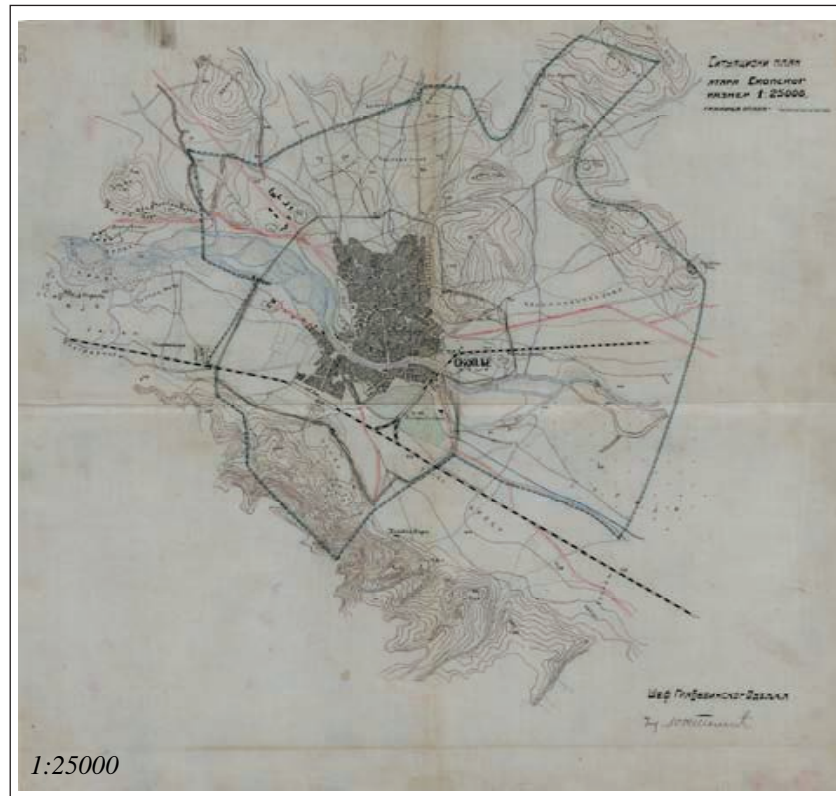
<sup>7</sup> The city will be included in the Southern Serbia *banovina* in 1929 (an administrative province of the Yugoslav Kingdom)

Contrary to many Balkan cities, then, Skopje's Ottoman legacy was not entirely destroyed. The city preserved some of its main symbolic features, such as its mosques and its Čaršija, which were still functional after the end of imperial rule. Muslim populations were not expelled from Skopje after the end of imperial rule and, even if many Turks left the city in the decades that followed, still more than a third of Skopje's inhabitants were Muslim during the interwar period and destroying the mosques would have met active resistance. Moreover, even if the Čaršija's small shops suffered from increasing competition from modern industries and the resulting disappearance of some traditional crafts, many others were preserved or adapted to the new market conditions. The Čaršija still answered the population's needs and, in a surprisingly short time after the liberation, it was considered an aspect of cultural heritage to be preserved.

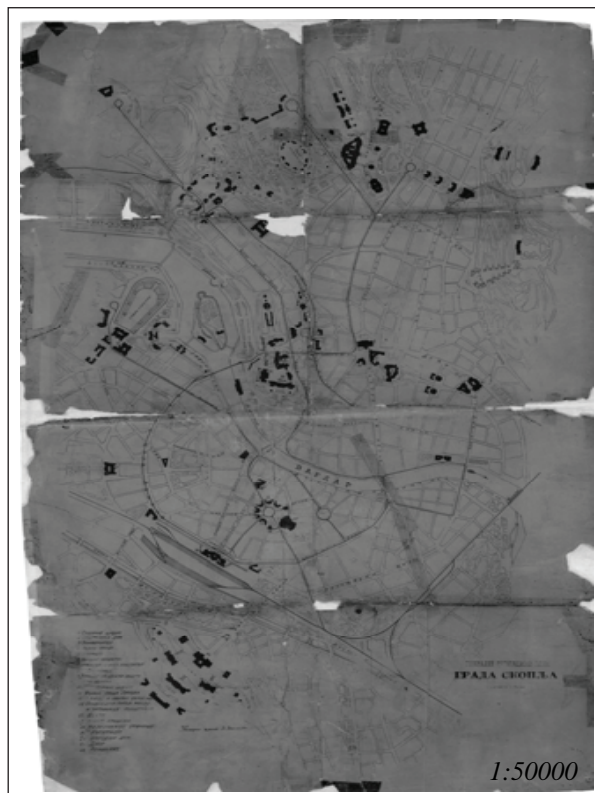
However, post-Ottoman planning was not lacking in ambiguities, as shown by the first regulation plan, designed in 1914 and implemented in 1924 (*figure 8a; 8b*). Realised by the renowned Serbian architect Leko, it promoted the *tabula rasa* approach but also encouraged the preservation of cultural heritage, following Sitte's defence of aesthetics in planning<sup>8</sup>. While the plan introduced orthogonal principles in newly built urban blocks, many Ottoman street patterns and buildings were left untouched. Influenced by the Viennese Ringstraße style, it made a clear break with the Ottoman organisation of space by supporting the development of public space and the introduction of green areas. Yet, soon after its adoption, this plan was judged too moderate by the municipal administration which aspired towards radical transformation. Functionalism entered Skopje with the 1928 and 1929 plans. They divided the city into functional 'regions' and 'quarters' (*figure 9a; 9b*). Influenced by Haussmann's Paris and grand manner Western European cities, the 1929 plan, realised by Skopje's mayor, Mihailović, broke with the typically curvy Ottoman streets by combining new linear axes with radial patterns. 'Modernity' was introduced through its most 'visible' aspect, with the massive enterprise of 'beautification' of the new centre located on the right side, something which may sound familiar to Skopjani today.

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<sup>8</sup> In his book, *The Art of Building Cities: City Planning according to its Artistic Principles* (1889), Sitte argued that urban planning is the joint work of the artist and the engineer, and that urbanism should not be reduced to a pragmatic and technical task. He criticised the emphasis put by most planners of his time on broad, functional streets and squares conceived for the convenience of traffic, and their lack of interest for religious and historical landmarks. He suggested instead to integrate art as one of the major bases of urban planning, favouring for instead the small, curved streets of medieval cities. Although his work had a great influence on the development of Western cities at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, his principles were rejected by modernist movement, in particular, by Le Corbusier.



a: Situation Plan of Skopje in 1914



b: Master Plan of Skopje in 1914, by Dimitrija T. Leko

Figure 8: Skopje urban plans in 1914





a: Situation Plan of Skopje in 1929



b: Master Plan of Skopje in 1929, by Josif Mihailovic

Sources: Archives of Macedonia

Figure 9 : Skopje urban plans in 1929

Whereas large squares surrounded by new public buildings were planned on both sides of the river, only one of them was eventually realised: Macedonia Square (*figure 10*). It is difficult to tell if it was simply a coincidence, but the fact remains that this new square was located on the right bank and soon become the central element and symbol of the ‘modern’ city. Conceived as an expression of state’s domination, the Square was meant to support the three-dimensional image of Serbian power (Lafazanovski, 2006): *political* power with the Officers’ House; *financial* power represented by the National Bank; and *cultural* power, already imprinted in the architecture of the place and reinforced by the National Theatre on the other side of the Vardar (but mostly visible from the square). The edification of public buildings in the new centre signified the assertion of state power: politics were expressed by administrative buildings (among which, the Post and Telegraph Office), finance with the Hypothecary Bank and a business centre next to the National Bank, and, finally, culture with a university, an exhibition fair, a sports centre and some hotels. The new architecture of the city centre was buttressed by its inclusion into wider spatial planning, with enlarged streets and boulevards, new squares, city blocks, and so on. This was all intended to convey a feeling of modernisation, Westernisation and power, and it was all concentrated on the right side of the Vardar.

Skopje’s outskirts were not left aside, though, with the expansion of the city and the construction of new residential units to answer the needs of migrants. One area, however, eluded the massive enterprise of municipal construction: the left side. While the old parts of Skopje were included in the 1929 Plan, the focus had clearly been placed on the ‘new’ city, i.e. the right side. Some streets were opened and others enlarged but, in general, most of the historical town was left untouched and preserved its traditional street pattern. Similarly, whereas building activity was intense on the Southern side, it remained very low in the Čaršija area and was limited to individual initiatives. Due to the economic crisis, the 1929 and, later, 1932 Plans (*figure 11a; 11b*) were not entirely implemented, and many parts of the city kept their 1912 appearance. It is not a coincidence that the left side preserved its traditional town design at the same time as new architectural forms and structures were adopted on the other side.

The end of the Ottoman Empire brought an evolution in the population of Skopje as well as in its planning and architecture. One of the most noticeable changes of the



a: Macedonia Street



b: The Stone bridge and the Officers' Club



c: The National Bank



d: The Macedonia Square



e: Macedonia Street

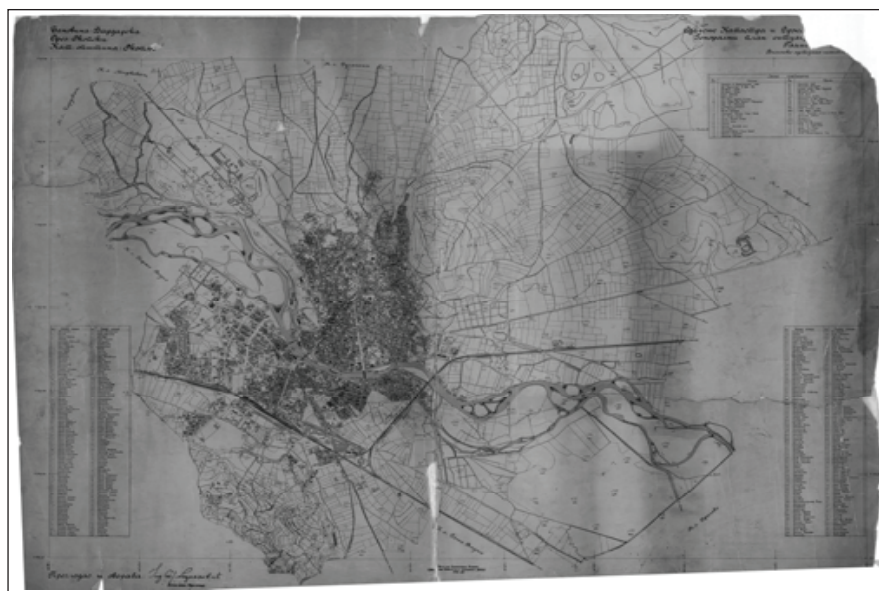


f: The Stone Bridge

Source: macedoniancities.com

Figure 10: Skopje city centre (Macedonia Square) in the 1920s and 1930s





interwar period was its considerable growth. From a medium-sized urban centre of 47,000 inhabitants in 1912, it became a large city of more than 80,000 inhabitants on the eve of WWII. However, this growth was unequally shared. Due to the problematic nature of censuses based on ethnic or religious criteria<sup>9</sup>, it is difficult to get a precise view, but major trends include the overall growth of the Christian population and a relative decrease in Muslim inhabitants<sup>10</sup> (*table 12*). This shift can be explained by several factors, some directly resulting from political decisions. Due to their privileged status in the new Kingdom, Christians benefited from positive natural increase and net migration, and from the growth of rural-urban migration<sup>11</sup>. With the end of the Empire and Mustapha Kemal's victories in Turkey, many Turks left Skopje, especially in the post-1912 decade. The decline of the total Muslim population was reinforced by the relative decrease of the Albanian communities during the interwar period, many of whom left for Turkey. Soon, however, these migrations stabilised and, after 1925, the overall proportion of Turks in the city did not change much and even slightly increased<sup>12</sup>.

<i>Religion</i>	<b>Orthodox</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>Muslim</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>Other</b>
<i>1926</i>	55%	2.7%	37.8%	3.8%	0.2%
<i>1929</i>	58.16%	unknown	34.5%	unknown	
<i>1935</i>	59.9%	2.6%	32.7%	4.9%	

<i>Nationality</i>	<b>Serbs</b>	<b>Turkish</b>	<b>Albanian</b>	<b>Roma</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>Other</b>
<i>1929</i>	60%	25%	3.4%	4.5%	4%	3.1%
<i>1931</i>	55%	25.8%	2.3%	16%		
<i>1935</i>	58%	26.5%	2.8%	3.5%	4.6%	5%

**Table 12: Stabilisation of demographic trends per ethnicity 1926-1935**

<sup>9</sup> The results expressed in the censuses realised during the interwar should be considered with much caution. Depending on the period, people were either referred to by their religion or their 'nationality', whose attribution was decided by the government officials rather than those concerned. The 'national' criterion was also victim of the central government's attempts to 'Serbianise' the region and deny any other nationalities than the 'Serbian' nationality to the Slavic populations.

<sup>10</sup> While in 1926 Christian and Muslim communities respectively made up 57.7% and 37.8% of the total population, this proportion became 62.5% and 32.7% in 1935.

<sup>11</sup> Rural areas were mainly populated by Slavic communities during the Ottoman Empire, whereas cities were usually in majority Muslim. After WWI, many rural populations settled to Skopje in order to work in manufacture or local agriculture.

<sup>12</sup> These variations must also be regarded with caution: without having precise statistics, it is probable that many people declared themselves as 'Turks' in order to move to Turkey.

Macedonian historiography justifies the narrative of the divided city by arguing that Skopje was already divided during Ottoman rule into two separate, Muslim and Slavic parts, respectively on the left and right side of the river. However, as I have suggested, Ottoman Skopje was mostly based on the northern banks of the Vardar. The southern banks started to be populated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it is only in the 1920s that it was developed and that a majority of Christian populations settled there. Explaining why this distribution occurred is difficult since different components interacted to generate and reinforce this distribution of communities in urban space. From a bottom-up perspective, these include the tendency of Muslims to live near their place of worship and the lack of mosques in the newly built parts of the city. Moreover, as little space was left in the old city, immigrants did not have much choice but to settle in the recently developed areas, that is, on the right side. During the interwar, most of them were Slavic and Christian peasants who had left the countryside to work in Skopje and settled along with their fellows, therefore encouraging the concentration of members of a same community in particular parts of the city. Reviving the Ottoman tradition, areas took the name of the migrants' place of provenance with, for example, people from Debar settling in Debar Maalo on the right side.

However, a top-down perspective rather suggests that the right side was favoured by the new enterprise of urban planning. Roma populations who had lived on this side<sup>13</sup> since the end of the 19th century were relocated by force by the city authorities, so as to create space for the new city. The regime also symbolically marked space: in a combined attempt to break with the former ruler and both 'Slavicise' and 'Christianise' the city, new churches were built, along with Serbian schools and gymnasiums. The southern side may have been home to spontaneous developments, but the Serbian authorities have played a major role in this process of ethnicisation of space.

The right bank, with its European style buildings, geometrical patterns and its concentration of Christian populations was equated with the 'new' city, whereas the left side, with its small and curvy streets, its private houses made of stone and wood and its majority of Muslim inhabitants, was considered the 'old' city. The interwar period also meant profound social changes, with the emergence of new social classes and differentiations in Skopje. While the Ottoman administration was mainly in the hand of Muslim communities, this situation changed as soon as the Yugoslav Kingdom

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<sup>13</sup> In an area called Gazi Mentash

established its authority over the Macedonian region. Skopje's ruling class was almost entirely Slavic, and there were very few Turks or Albanians among the executives. Skopje's social structure also changed. The interwar period was marked the impoverishment of Skopje's Muslims, the Muslim guilds being the most severely stricken by the decline of traditional crafts and development of capitalist industries. Roma were also among the poorest fringes of urban society, with most of them working as daily workers, shoe cleaners, washers or porters. On the other side of the social spectrum, the urban elite was made up of Serbs occupying the higher functions in industry, business or administration, and with very high living standards. Most of them lived on the right side of the Vardar, as the new inhabitants of 'modern' Skopje.

The interwar period thus marked a shift in the geography of Skopje. To many, this shift is explained by the city's rupture with 'tradition' and entry into 'modernity'. Yet, the importance of this shift rather lies in the new lines of division that marked urban space. Spontaneous settlements played a part in this process, but it was mostly guided by urban elites who deliberately pushed back the 'traditional city' and enclosed it to the left side, while concentrating investments on the 'modern', right side. New neighbourhoods were created, and new lines of ethnic and religious segregation were also formed. Rather than curbing the city's fragmentation, the post-Ottoman period created the conditions for new and more profound divisions to emerge and leave a visible mark in urban space. The great losers of the interwar development were Skopje's Muslims, who not only lost the privileged status they had maintained for five centuries, but also experienced further impoverishment and marginalisation. It is also in this period that state efforts bore their fruit and Skopje definitively lost its image of an 'Islamic city'. However, it did not become the 'Christian and Slavic city' the Yugoslav rulers sought to create. Rather, Skopje became a 'mixed' city, home to visible spatial differentiation where ethnic and religious criteria were progressively starting to intersect with social ones.

The establishment of socialism in Macedonia is usually seen as a completely new start in the history of the city. But I would argue that this classical dichotomy between pre-socialism and socialism should be qualified in terms of urban planning and structure. Planning principles and practices did not evolve a lot immediately after WWII and the two decades that followed the end of the Yugoslav Kingdom in Macedonia were

rather a continuation of the attempt to ‘Europeanise’ the city. The real break occurred in 1963, when a tremendous earthquake destroyed a major part of the city and led to its reconstruction under new urban planning principles.

With the socialist ‘liberation’ of Skopje during WWII, the city was promoted to become capital of a new federal Republic whose official language was, for the first time, Macedonian. Many elements recalling the Axis Powers’ rule disappeared and new names and images made their appearance. The main square was renamed ‘Marshal Tito Square’, new memorials were erected and others, such as the monument of the Serbian kings, were melted and recast with new national symbols. However, apart from these ostentatious acts, not much was undertaken to transform the city. The 1948 urban plan of Ladjek Kubes (*figure 11c*) was not a real break with the past since it was developed in 1940 according to standards and norms prevailing before the war. Functionalist dogma was still at the core of the project, with the city divided into functional zones and a hierarchical organisation of buildings. Yet, there were some elements of novelty, including the introduction of a new East-West axis of development for the city, in rupture with the prevailing North-South orientation. This may explain why the left side was chosen as the location for the new Parliament, along with other administrative and public buildings – a clear break with the past. These principles, which could have deeply altered Skopje’s development, were suddenly interrupted in 1963, however, and totally new planning norms and ideals were then put forward.

## **2 Building the new socialist city**

The 1963 earthquake had almost as important consequences for the city as the war. But what impacted even more on Skopje than the earthquake itself was probably the massive effort of reconstruction and planning that followed. In only a few years, very little of the interwar city was left, demolished either by or in the aftermath of the earthquake (*figure 13*). A symbol of this major urban transformation – or the power of socialist propaganda – was the fact that 80 percent of Skopje’s school pupils chose to write about the Master Plan rather than the disaster when asked to write an essay on ‘*a major event in the life of my town*’ in the 1960s (Home, 2007). Given the significance of this reconstruction for the city, it is necessary to question the principles and norms on which it rested, along with its implementation in terms of urban structure, population distributions and mental perceptions. If the socialist planners and architects put forward





Figure 13: Skopje after the 1963 earthquake

the idea of an ‘Open City’, how did we end up with a ‘divided city’? To address this question, I first consider the principles guiding socialist urban planning before focusing on the reality of segregation in socialist cities. I then examine and discuss the foundations and effects of socialist planning in post-1963 Skopje.

## **2.1 The Socialist City: from the Plan to the Reality**

Post-earthquake planning occurred in Skopje in a specific context. The Republic of Macedonia was then part of a Socialist Federation whose urban policy – even if different from that of the Soviet Union – shared some common characteristics with it. The existence of a distinctively socialist city has been much debated (French and Hamilton, 1973; Smith, 1996), but we can at least recognise the existence of a set of principles and norms guiding urban planning and architecture in socialist countries. Whereas most Western cities planned to increase their open space and decrease the density of population after 1945, socialist guidelines supported the image of a compact city, with high-rise buildings and almost no suburbanisation (Häussermann, 1996). The absence of private property and the concentration of investments in the hand of the state made socialist urban planning unique in the contemporary world. State-led central and hierarchical organisation was also the rule for any planning decisions: the state was in charge of urban planning and of all the means to implement it.

Centralist conceptions of socialism were reflected in the urban layout, with the city centre becoming a major focal point, although in a very different manner than in capitalist cities, where business dominated. Socialist planning conceived the centre, not as an area of retail concentration, but as a political, cultural and administrative place (Fisher, 1962), in which architecture was to support state power. The role of urban ‘art’ and design was to portray the victory of socialism. The homogeneous structure of the centre also aimed at showing the team spirit at work in socialist countries, as opposed to the fragmented capitalist community (Häussermann, 1996). This explains why socialist cities were conceived according to a clear order and a hierarchy between axes of development, central squares and monumental enclosures. Streets were to ‘belong to the people’, but the vast boulevards and squares were designed for parades and demonstrations; through such functionalism would socialist values be imprinted onto urban society.

Cities were regarded by authorities as the focal points for the realisation of 'socialist modernity' from which stemmed the goal of a classless society (Sailer-Fliege, 1999). In order for all the inhabitants to have an equal access to the 'socialist way of life', urban uniformity was the rule. There was to be no spatial segregation of different classes and groups. These theoretical principles were materialised by the adoption of operational norms in planning, including the standardisation of 'living space'. Each town had a pre-defined 'proper' size and the city itself was divided into self-contained units. These 'neighbourhoods' were the most basic element of socialist cities, which also rested upon the establishment of norms in terms of housing. Within such guidelines, visible social divisions in urban space were thought of as being a symbol of the past.

Yet, how was the pre-socialist legacy taken into account by socialist planners? As a reminder of capitalist conditions – assumed to have been overcome – the pre-1945 buildings were, following the urban renewal logic, usually planned for demolition. However, the basic structure of the socialist city described by French and Hamilton (1979) reveals a quite different reality, with the maintenance of an historical core and elements of the previous capitalist period in the city centre. In many cities, pre-war buildings characterised by low living standards remained – a situation likely to generate some cracks in the apparently smooth socialist urban machinery. The issue of pre-1945 dwellings and their maintenance despite the planning guidelines shows how segregation found a breach and made its appearance in socialist cities. Confronted by a perpetual shortage of housing, urban authorities had no other choice than to temporarily keep the decaying pre-war buildings, which constituted a poor-quality housing stock for elderly of immigrant households (Sailer-Fliege, 1999). This break in the seemingly non-negotiable egalitarian ideals of socialism was, however, not unique and larger cases of residential differentiation were discernible in a great majority of Eastern European cities.

Drawing from Szelenyi's (1983) analysis of inequality in socialist cities and from the typology of socio-economic and spatial differentiation established by Smith (1996) in the case of Soviet cities, it is possible to infer that such cases of segregation were not absent from Eastern European urban centres either. Socialist cities were divided into various kinds of districts, defined by their location and status. First, white-collar workers and members of the *nomenklatura* were to be found in high-status areas of good housing and easy access to service provision, with, second, migrants and

manual workers in old and deteriorating housing, or with a low service provision. It is thus hard to deny the reality of social and spatial differentiation in socialist cities. In analysing such patterns, Szelenyi (1983) differentiated inequalities inherited from the capitalist past from new, emerging, inequalities, which arose logically from the socialist system of production and distribution. Housing inequalities were thus created by the very mechanism that was meant to replace and reverse unequalising market allocation – socialist administrative allocation. Indeed, multiple inequalities were present in urban life, affecting the size and quality of living space; the type of tenure and period of construction; the public or private character of housing (with the latter very often made up of poor material and confined to fringes, small town or countryside); the quality of service provision; and the time lag between the construction of housing blocks and related services.

The state had a major part in the failure to achieve urban uniformity (Hamilton, 1993, cf. Smith, 1996). While the housing allocation system was officially considered a right for every inhabitant, it was also a privilege and reward for specific categories of citizens. Both the nomenklatura and the intelligentsia could benefit from higher-status districts or housings. Quotas for companies, public organisations and administration determined the number of people who could benefit from better quality housing (Häussermann, 1996). Referring to the Yugoslav case, Fisher (1962) noted the increasing development of socially distinct areas, ‘upper-class ghettos’ reserved for the top-layer of the party. Because Yugoslavia’s upper classes could not afford to pay higher rents in luxury housing, the latter received more state subsidies than standard housing did (Szelenyi, 1983).

To complete this ostensibly paradoxical image of inequality in a society built on supposedly egalitarian ideals, we should not forget the issue of ethnic segregation. Social and economic differentiation in capitalist cities often takes on an ethnic or racial dimension, but was this the case for socialist cities? Unfortunately, not many authors have explored this point, especially in Eastern Europe and ex-Yugoslavia, where urban ethnic segregation has been studied even less than in the Soviet Union. A small number of authors have focused on Central Asian cities, where the evidence of ethnic spatial differentiation under socialism could not be denied (Smith, 1996). It seems that this question was an even greater taboo than the one of social segregation during socialism. As I will show, in Skopje, this issue was hushed up rather than tackled head-on.

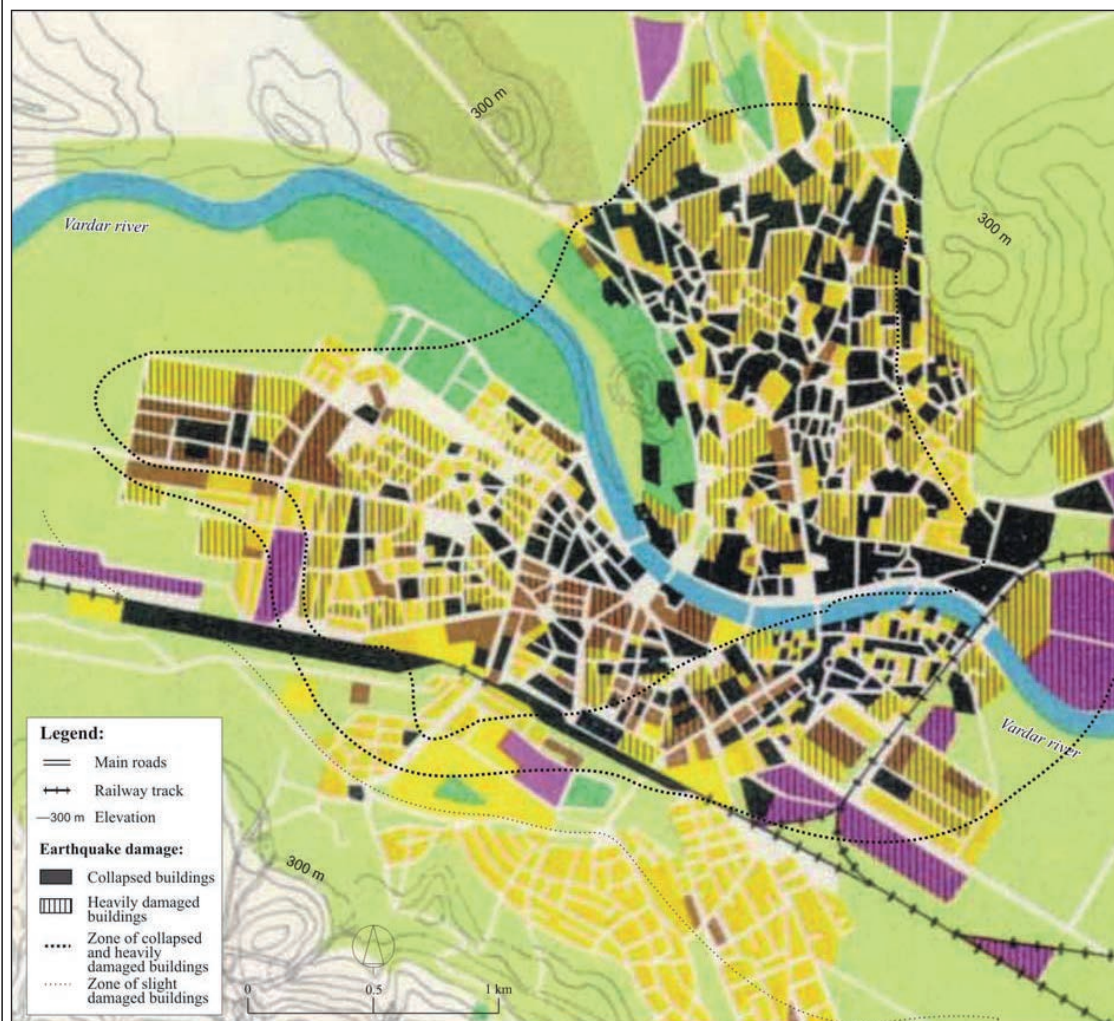
We should not overestimate the extent of segregation in socialist cities. In most cases, the majority of inhabitants had similar standards of living and, because of the absence of huge gaps that could have divided them, social and spatial segregation was less marked than in capitalist cities (Häussermann, 1996). This conclusion is shared by Smith (1996), although the author rather emphasises the difference of character between such phenomena as they appear in the West or the East. Broad spatial differentiations and inequalities in occupational status, housing or education among urban dwellers did exist, but they were found in medium-sized and large cities rather than in small centres. Their extent also varied a lot depending on the city's history and the survival of pre-war housing and state housing enclaves. Residential sorting could be expected where distinctive ethnic groups were present, and where family structures differed a lot. Finally, once residential segregation became established, it seems to have been a reinforcing rather than disappearing phenomenon. If by 'urban uniformity' we mean the truly classless distribution of the population in urban space without any regard to their economic or political status, then this ideal was certainly not obtained in socialist cities. I now examine in more detail the issue of Skopje and analyse the impact of socialist planning on the city's division tendencies.

## **2.2 The foundations of socialist planning in post-earthquake Skopje**

Very early in the morning of July 26, 1963, a 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck Skopje. It killed more than 1,000 inhabitants, injured between 3,000 and 4,000 others, and left more than 75 percent of people homeless. Almost 65 percent of housing was lost, and 80 percent of the city was destroyed. While only 2.5 percent of the existing buildings remained fit for occupation, the most severely affected by the disaster were the older mud brick and mixed constructions already weakened by the 1962 flood – most of which dated from the Ottoman era and unsurprisingly were concentrated on the left side (*figure 14*). While this event was a catastrophe for Skopje and Yugoslavia, it was also a great opportunity to reconstruct the city almost from scratch and give a fresh impetus for the capital of the federal republic.

Skopje's earthquake occurred in a very specific context. The 1962 Cuba Crisis had just shown the limits of the East/West bipolarisation, Tito's Yugoslavia was then a non-aligned country well-regarded by the international community, and the crisis happening in Congo was showing the limits of the United Nations peacekeeping action





Damage impact of the 1963 earthquake:

- Residential buildings: 42.2% partial or total collapsed apartments ; 32.9% heavy damaged apartments
- Homeless population: 75.5% of total 178,600 inhabitants
- Primary and secondary schools: 27.5% partial or total collapse; 74.3% heavy damaged
- Hospitals and clinics: 33.5% partial or total collapse; 66.5% heavy damaged.



Figure 14: Damage distribution of buildings due to the 1963 earthquake

amidst an event which was as much an anti-colonialist battle as a proxy war between the two superpowers. When the Skopje earthquake happened, the UN was therefore keen to show its potential for promoting international cooperation (Home, 2006). For the international community, the reconstruction of the Macedonian capital was seen as an opportunity for co-work in a divided world (Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011). For the Yugoslav authorities, Skopje became a symbol of brotherhood and solidarity.

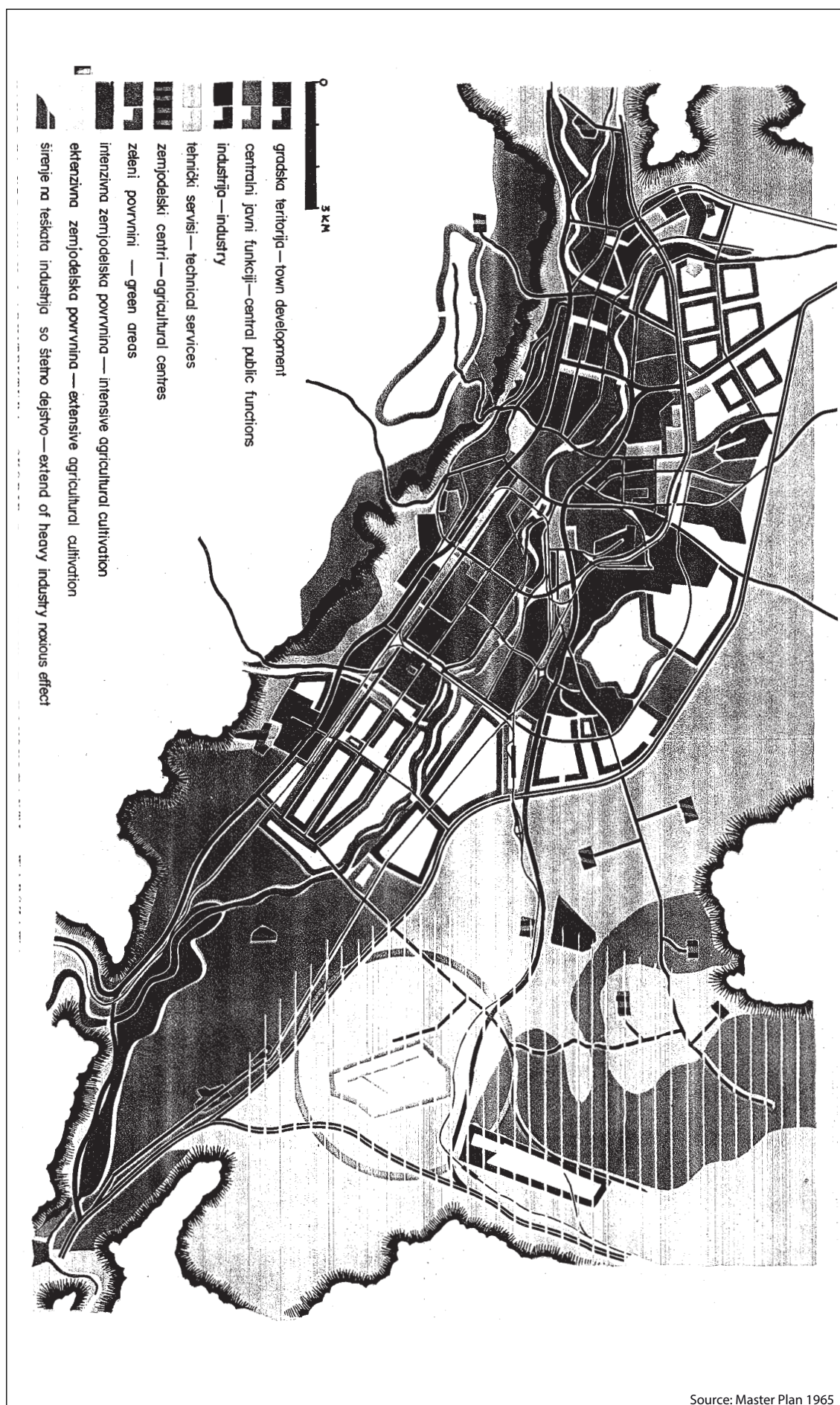
Within the days that followed the earthquake, 35 nations requested that Skopje should be placed on top of the UN agenda, and relief was provided from almost 80 countries. While contacts had been cut between West and East in Berlin, Skopje was declared an 'Open City'. This demonstration of international solidarity inspired Tito, who declared at the UN General Assembly in 1965 that the disaster 'reflected the desire of the overwhelming majority of the people throughout the world to prevent the far greater catastrophe which a nuclear war would bring upon mankind.'<sup>14</sup> The immediate reconstruction went very quickly thanks to the importation of temporary prefabricated houses – some of which can still be seen today. The planning process went almost as rapidly: only ten months were necessary to work on the General Plan, which was directed by the Office of Urbanism and Architecture of Skopje, but whose actual conception was split among a Polish company, Polservice, which had worked on the reconstruction of post-war Warsaw, and the 'Doxiadis Associates' company, led by the Greek architect Doxiadis, an old collaborator of the UN. As for the city centre, its planning was the object of an international competition which ended in July 1965 with two winning projects: the proposition of the Croatians Mišćević and Wenzler, and that of the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange. These propositions were fused into a single plan, the 'ninth version'.

The general Master Plan for Skopje (*figures 15; 16*) was a synthesis of two different projects: the Greek team of Doxiadis was in charge of imaging the city's areas, housing, traffic and transports, as well as its infrastructure, while the Polish team of Adolf Ciborowski, Warsaw's chief architect, was responsible for the Social Review (an independent survey) as well as the General Plan and the Regional Plan. Doxiadis was a controversial figure: he was a well-regarded UN partner, but also a 15-year collaborator of the Ford Foundation, then directed by the former administrator of the Marshall Plan. During this period of Cold War, any means to export either socialist or capitalist culture

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<sup>14</sup> Official records of the UN General Assembly, Eighteenth Session, 1251th plenary meeting (cited in Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011, p.13).

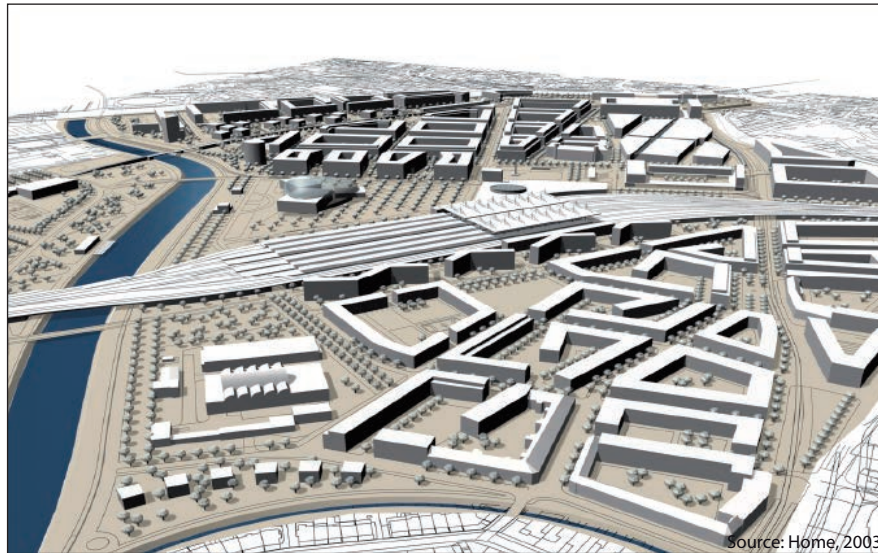




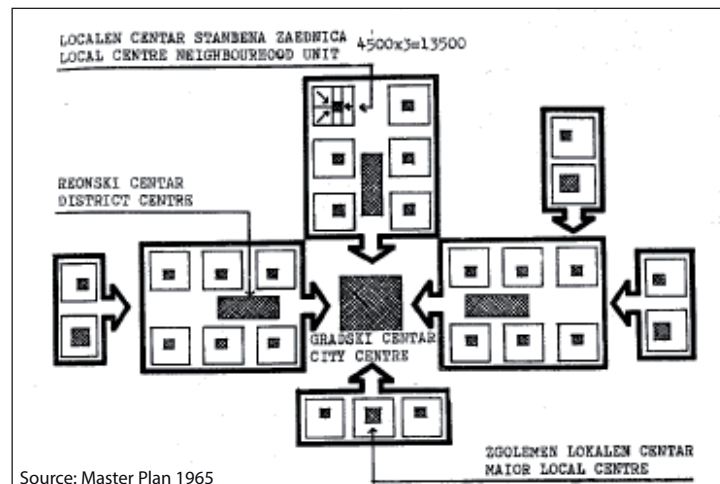
Source: Master Plan 1965

Figure 15: Skopje 1965 Master Plan

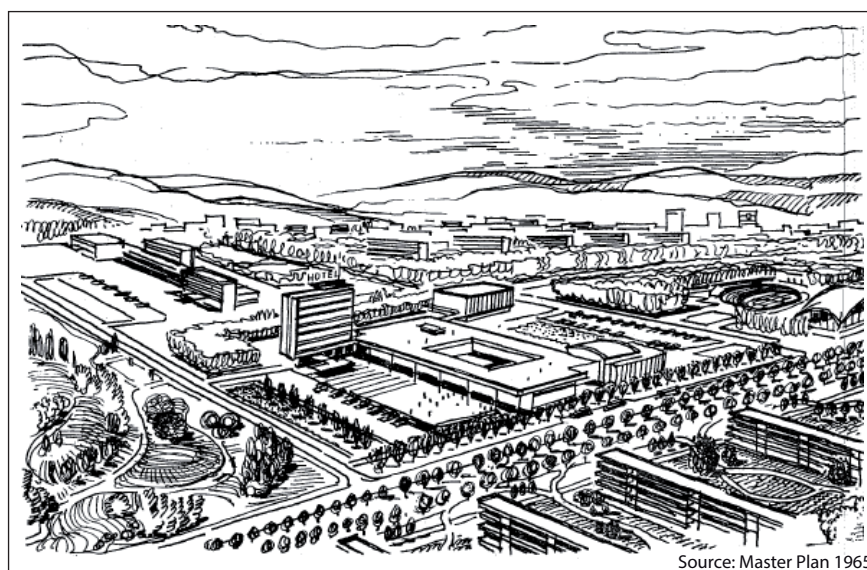




a: A Master Plan perspective view on the Northern side from the city centre (foreground), with the railway station in the centre and the municipality of Aerodrom in the background



b: The standard local centre neighbourhood unit according to the Master Plan.



c: Perspective view on the city centre from the Northern side, with the GTC (City Commercial Centre) in the centre and the Vardar in the foreground.

Figure 16: 1965 Master Plan perspectives

was seized upon by the two superpowers. Architecture and planning did not escape this struggle; that they worked undercover rendered them all the more powerful as cultural instruments. From the 1950s onwards, the Ford Foundation invested a lot of money in urban projects around the world – ‘new cities’ which were meant to be ‘neutral’ in terms of planning, but also supposed to demonstrate an absolute faith in technology and to promote freedom, democracy and anti-collectivism (Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011). Among these projects to assure the loyalties of developing countries, those of Doxiadis were particularly appreciated.

Doxiadis’s conception of planning drew from functionalist doctrine, and especially Le Corbusier, for whom function predicated form (Gold, 1998). Functionalism, as formulated in the 1920s and 1930s CIAM (*Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne*), placed rationality, standardisation and geometry as its main pillars, and expressed an explicit concern for town planning as ‘the organisation of the functions of collective life’<sup>15</sup>. Doxiadis definitely belonged to the ‘old school’ functionalists, who supported a top-down conception of planning and for whom social and political issues ought not to appear in city planning. His newspaper ‘Ekistis’, dedicated to the ‘science of human settlements’, conceived planning as a highly rational study similar to ‘the work of a human computer, completely objectified, with no aesthetics or personal choices’ (Provoost, 2006). Doxiadis usually stood at the opposite side of socialist planning and architecture. His work left no room for urban imagery, such as the vista, the axis, the square and the monumental – all the elements of a repertoire aimed to be recognised by the common people. Ekistics promoted a completely new system of planning organised in grids and schemes designed for unlimited growth and change, following the belief (shared by Eastern European planners) that human needs and rights are the same everywhere and that planning should stick to a rational – hence ‘neutral’ – approach. Most of Doxiadis’s projects promoted the respect of individual property and opposed the informal, organic growth of historical cities – such as Skopje (Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011). For the Ford Foundation, Doxiadis’s projects were a way to educate non-Western people into becoming rational urban inhabitants – a much more powerful way to exert control than those of an old-fashioned empire.

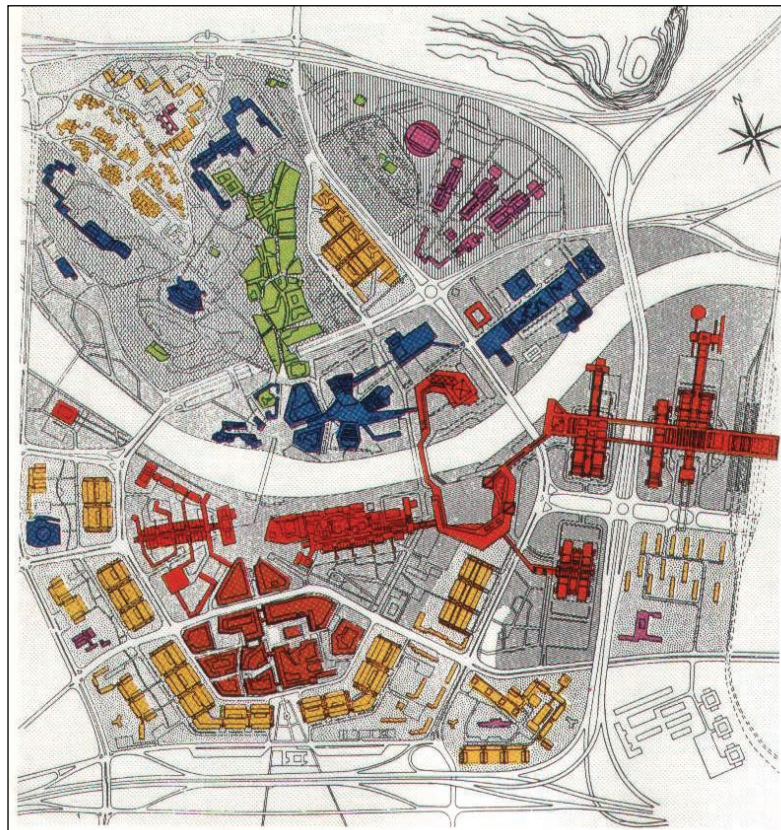
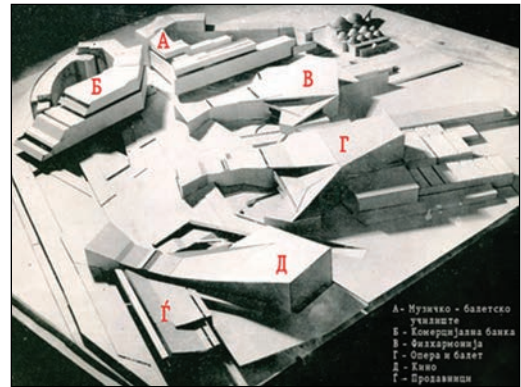
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<sup>15</sup> Déclaration of the CIAM I, 1928, clauses II.1 and II. 2, translated by Gold, 1998:230.

On the opposite side were two different approaches, those of Weissmann and Ciborowski. A Croatian architect, at the head of the Department for Social Affairs at the UN and member of the CIAM, Weissmann had also worked with Le Corbusier but belonged to the 'leftist' wing of the CIAM, which vividly opposed the hyper-rationalisation of urban planning and the statistical division of the city and its inhabitants into abstract zones and variables. His emphasis on sociology and human dimension of planning placed him on the opposite side to Doxiadis, which enabled Skopje planners to focus more on human issues than would have been the case had he not been here. The second balancing factor was the presence of the Polish team. Due to the extent of the damage, post-earthquake Skopje had from the beginning been compared to post-war Warsaw. Yet, the approach chosen in 1964 was very different than the one employed in Warsaw, which was to rebuild the city centre after the historical one. Not all the existing stock had been destroyed in Skopje but many damaged buildings were removed without debate. The idea of rebuilding Skopje as it was before 1963 was not on the planners' agenda. Skopje was seen 'as an ideal surface, on which it was possible to build a different city: a brand new capital that had nothing to do with the old, modest and everyday city' (Tolic, 2010:109). The 'Open City' myth was born.

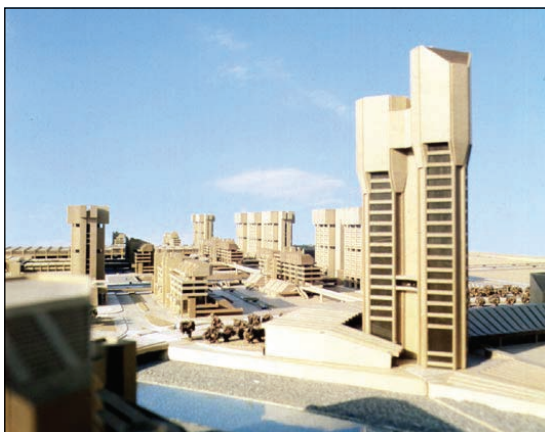
Maybe more than the general Master Plan itself, what is usually remembered by Skopjani is the special plan for the city centre (*figure 17*). The project that was eventually adopted in 1965 was a compromise of two very different proposals, one of which came from Tange. A leading member of the Metabolist movement, Tange was also inspired by Le Corbusier. Published in 1922, *La Ville Contemporaine* presented the 'city of towers' – a geometrical, centralised and efficient organisation – as the ideal form of the industrial age – an appealing concept for Metabolism's utopias. In Metabolism, society was seen as an object amenable to scientific study and rational construction. Taylor's theory of scientific management was in everyone's mind, and technology was seen as a social liberator which could change social structure. Faced with the paralysis of already existing cities, Metabolists dreamt of totally new urban structures – something post-earthquake Skopje could offer (*figure 18*). Yet, judged too unrealistic, Tange's project was not adopted as it was. The judging panel was split between the ambition to satisfy post-1963 utopian hopes and a mediatic need for spectacle and the fears that such an inadequate and oversized project might never be realised. The 'ninth version' was eventually adopted as a combination between Tange's





a: The Cultural Centre, a multifunctional building, including a theatre, an opera, a ballet, a music academy, some shops and a bank.

b: The urban plan for the city centre: in yellow, the apartment complex City Wall; in red, commercial and functional buildings; in blue, cultural buildings; in green, the Stara Čaršija and its historical buildings.



Realisation: O. Véron January 2013

Photos: Museum of the City of Skopje

Figure 17: The City Centre 1965 Master Plan





a: A view on the South side of the Vardar: the Goce Delčev bridge, built in 1971; on the left, the most notable building of the socialist city centre, the Telecommunication Center and the Central Post Office, inspired either by the nearby medieval fortress or by an exotic flower; behind, the City Wall - an apartment complex drawn up by K. Tange to metaphorically 'protect' the heart of the city, as medieval walls used to do.



b: The Macedonian Radio and Television building, built in 1971-83 on the east-north side, delimitates the city centre.



c: The Catholic Church was built after Tange's Saint-Mary's Cathedral of Tokyo, as an homage to the architect who helped rebuild Skopje.



d: The Publishing house Nova Makedonija, built in 1981 with a pronounced 'corporate' stylistic identity, was recently transformed into an office building.



e: The Central Post office - close view.



f: The Hydro-Meteorological Institute, built in 1977 in raw concrete, is the work of the architect Krsto Todorovski.

Photos: Architecture Brigade

Figure 18: Socialist Skopje

plan and the one advanced by the Town Planning Institute of Croatia. Tange's project was largely retained, but in a slightly more modest and realistic way, as a hybrid between the functionalist and the socialist paradigms.

Skopje's Master Plan was therefore a mix of different conceptions of urban planning: the socialist ideal of urban uniformity, the rational and standardised principles of functionalism, and the shared belief that everything was possible on this new space – balanced by a certain concern on human issues, but which was not predominant. Given these preconditions, to which extent Skopje's planners took into account the pre-socialist legacy? Not all the city had been destroyed by the earthquake and entire neighbours remained standing, despite being sometimes seriously damaged. How could the principles guiding Skopje's planning apply to these areas, most of whom being located on the northern side of the Vardar? I will now examine how the new planning was practically implemented on the city, and analyse how, from the ideal 'Open City', Skopje's image ended up that of a 'Divided City'.

### **3 From an 'Open City' to a 'Divided City'?**

#### **3.1 The awareness of a two-faceted city**

In parallel with the preparation of the Master Plan, the Yugoslav authorities launched a vast sociological survey in Skopje, aimed at assisting the planners in their work. Relying on students to conduct interviews in about 400 families, the *Social Survey*, published in 1964, was a first in Yugoslavia. The most significant result of this examination of the Skopjani's conditions and ways of living was the recognition of two separate zones which divided the city. Without any surprise, these two areas – called 'Region A' and 'Region B' – respectively matched the two different sides of the Vardar. The two zones differed as much by the social and economic profiles of their populations, as by their cultural development. While the right side – 'Region A' – was marked by rather high standards, the left side, or 'Region B', had lower standards – lower incomes, older and crowded dwellings – and comprised a majority of people belonging to the Albanian, Turkish and Roma communities.

Breaking with the functionalist dogmas of Skopje's planners, the survey established a link between ethnicity and ways of living. It showed that minority ethnic groups concentrated on the left side were more attached to their location in the city than to the technical standards of their place of living. Both the proximity of religious

buildings and the existence of family and neighbourhoods ties led the survey to conclude that these populations would certainly not want to abandon their houses with the start of the destruction programme, nor would they support new housing if that meant a new location in the city, far from their fellows. While their accommodations suffered considerable destruction from the earthquake, they preferred to reconstruct them on an individual basis. These conclusions would loom large in the final decisions taken by the planners, torn between the need to abolish spatial, social and ethnic barriers, and the importance of respecting specific cultural characteristics and desires. The decision to create separate centres for Skopje's different ethnic group was opposed by the planners, who inscribed the need to end the division of the city in the very principles of the Plan. But how would this be achieved?

Post-earthquake urban planning was claimed to be 'neutral', but its effect was far from neutral. Home (2007) referred to Skopje's planners as self-confident interventionist social engineers. Their goal was indeed to get rid of the city slums as soon as possible, even if this implied a need to 're-educate' people to abandon private housing for medium- and high-rise housing, and work on homogenising society to adapt it to modern urban life. They faced two problems here. First, the available resources for re-housing could not fit the Plan's forecasts to destroy 30 percent of pre-earthquake slums in only five years. Only 5 percent of sub-standard housing could have been relocated in new – and smaller – dwellings. Second, the planners had to take into account the analyses of the *Social Survey* and to respect inhabitants' cultural differences. Traditional practices, such as having separate rooms for family and guests or 'doubling-up' families with in-laws, were seen as 'dysfunctional'. Following Doxiadis's 'science of human settlements', planning relied on computers to reconcile the limited public resources and the housing project, devising various permutations based on the nuclear family model – a model which was not the norm on the left side.

In order to neutralise the 'socially pernicious division of the city' (UNDP, 1970), social and structural differences between the two sides of the river were to be erased. The city centre competition fixed a number of recommendations which had to appear in the projects. The Vardar – presented as a bordering line in the city – was to be turned into a unifying element. The development of Regions A and B was not to be conceived separately, but included in one communal entity. Skopje's planners insisted that the Čaršija should not become a 'folkloric museum' or lose its special architecture and atmosphere, but be included in the modern city centre as a lively shopping area.

Similarly, the main university would be built on the left side, in order to improve its socio-cultural situation. According to Home (2007), the official aim of these measures – responsible for the destruction of some historical mosques and churches – was to avoid a ‘town-and-gown’ separation of the city. While the right side would become the political, financial and commercial centre of the city, the left side would be its cultural reflection. The river was conceived as a collective and uniting space. Stemming from these political and aesthetical considerations, two central squares spreading out on both riversides were planned: the ‘Liberty Square’ on the traditional north-south axis, on the northern bank, and the ‘Marshal Tito Square’ on the other bank. A third ‘Republic Square’ was to mark the symbolic central of the republic on the new east-west axis. Only one, on the right side, would ever be achieved.

Skopje’s planning was guided by functional considerations. The Master Plan divided Skopje into 8 zones, themselves divided into 280 ‘land-area units’. Neighbourhood units, based upon the optimal size of primary schools, were planned on the basis of 6000 inhabitants, and three main district centres were to relieve the city centre. The entire rationalisation of the city was made possible thanks to the absence of a private sector whose interests could have clashed with those of the socialist authorities. In this context where politics and architecture were tightly interwoven, the city centre was meant to become the essence of ‘the Open City’. In the whole story of socialist planning, the Skopje plan is probably the case where the peculiar principles of ‘West’ and ‘East’ are the most integrated. The Macedonian city was a special case, not only in Yugoslavia and in the socialist sphere, but in the world.

### **3.2 Loopholes in city planning**

Despite the best of intentions, the Master Plan contained the seeds of urban fragmentation. The functional standards set by Skopje’s planners could not but collide with the reality of the city as a lived environment. Although the risk of social and spatial segregation had been felt by the authorities, their measures did little to increase the potential for communitisation and played an important role in the reinforcement of urban divisions.

Despite its conclusions and recommendations, the *Social Survey* had a very limited impact on Skopje’s planning. Despite having pointed towards the risk of division, this had not been followed by any appropriate measures or practical efforts to



counter it. The introduction to the Master Plan did recall the survey's results and call for an abolition of the division of the city in two zones, but there is no mention of this division in the Plan itself, as if it had simply disappeared from the planners' minds. This omission was followed by a number of mistakes. First, while the *Social Survey* had underlined the potential resistance of minority groups to the idea of abandoning their houses with the start of the clearing program, this aspect was underestimated by the planners. Instead of working on the reconstruction and sanitisation of the derelict northern residential areas, the official building policy was directed towards the conquest of new spaces, outside the historic urban space.

At the same time, the government rejected the idea of forced relocations to new high-rise buildings. While the Master Plan clearly mentioned that Albanian, Turkish and Roma would 'not want to abandon their houses', it stated that 'based on economic changes, education and work security, the social relations of the populations living in substandard zone would change and would lead them to contribute to the new housing construction'<sup>16</sup>. Sooner or later, these 're-educated' populations would, by effect of attraction, move to the new, more 'comfortable' and 'modern' places. While these inhabitants were left to their fate in crumbling areas referred to as 'slums' by Acevski (1996), nothing was undertaken to assist the reconstruction of these zones. Roma populations, seen as difficult to 're-educate' in the short-term, were either left in Topaana or relocated and encouraged to develop their own urban enclave in Suto Orizari, where they could stay until they formed the wish of 'entering modernity'. This predicted change never happened, nor did the planned homogenisation of urban inhabitants.

It is legitimate to hold the global approach of Skopje's planning responsible for the problematic outcomes it had on the city. From the beginning, utopian inspiration informed the planning of the new city. Such foundations could have been fruitful, had not they been completely disconnected with the reality of Skopje as a lived environment. In Lefebvrian terms, this means that Skopje's *perceived space* of everyday social life has been ignored by the 'peopleless' (Gronlund, 1993) *conceived space* of planners. The lack of consideration for societal issues is visible in an aspect of planning the *Social Survey* denounced from the beginning: the heavy reliance of the Office for Urbanism and Architecture on statistics dating from 1961. Given the considerable

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<sup>16</sup> *Master Plan 1965*, City of Skopje, p.60

impact of the disaster in the city, demographic, economic and urban data prior to the earthquake hardly reflected the actual physical and social structure of Skopje in 1965. Yet, as appears in the Master Plan, those statistics were chosen by the planners to establish their project. While the Plan refers to the *Social Survey*, it did not take into account most of its results or suggestions, such as the wishes expressed by the inhabitants. For instance, 81.5 percent of those interviewed expressed the wish to live in individual housing: how to explain the re-housing policy based solely on computer's calculations? The *Social Survey* insisted on the need to take into consideration sociological factors, such as the Northern side's structural changes. Its introduction clearly stated that the 'national' factor directly determined many social and economic factors, due to specific cultural reasons. It also underlined the lack of demographic prognosis (number of inhabitants, structure of the households) as a barrier to check the realism of the basic statistics provided by urban planners. As a result, it is not surprising that problems found only partial solutions.

Skopje's planning process did not differ a lot from common socialist planning and from post-WWII Western planning either. As it is still the case today, there has never been any public debate or consultation on Skopje's planning. The post-earthquake policy simply 'forgot' the people living in this urban space and proceeded as if the inhabitants did not have any concrete needs or, simply, as if they did not exist. The best example of such practices is the case of Topaana. In 1965, the planners acted as if this area were an 'empty space', where substandard housing removal was not even an issue: soon, a 'new' Topaana would rise. Unfortunately, the Old Topaana would not have it and, today, it is the poorest Roma area of the city.

Acevski (1996) is particularly critical of what he describes as a superficial, formal and unrealistic activity, limited to a sterile 'drawing skill' which conceived the city as an empty object on which everything was possible. To him, the plan which eventually came out of this closed cabinet was a 'static entity' or a 'world in itself' and it had completely lost ground with the everyday experience of the urban society. Home (2007:20) similarly writes that 'the Master Plan was a creature of its time. Architect-planners of the modern movements, confident in their role of remaking the post-war world, worked with the state rather than the people'. While Acevski's words are certainly too harsh, his and Home's critics are grounded. As highly functional ideals governed city planning, the social sphere was mostly left outside the interest of Skopje's planners, who favoured instead a rational and productive organisation of space. Hence

Skopje's Master Plan closely matching Lefebvre's (1974:38) *conceived space*, the 'conceptualised space of scientist, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers', a space which appears to be disconnected with both *perceived and lived space*, the physical and mental space of Skopjani. Many reasons could be mentioned to explain the disparity between the space of planners and that of Skopjani, from the application of an inadequate land policy to the neglect of crucial information. Planners chose a 'prefabricated model' for a city whose development was understood only in quantitative and physical terms. Systematic principles, stemming from the 'city as an object' approach, left not only a negative legacy of urban development, but also one of submissive public attitudes. By confiscating the planning process from those who would be the most legitimate to handle it – its inhabitants – post-earthquake planning left the latter with the expectation that the state and its technocrats would always be there to dictate 'solutions' and no room would ever be left for civic initiative – a major issue with which Skopje is confronted blatantly today. Yet, I would add that Skopje's Master Plan is not the only one to blame: as I will show, the way it was practically implemented is also responsible for its results.

### **3.3 The failure of post-earthquake planning**

In 1985, urban authorities officially recognised the failure of the past twenty years of planning and the need to adopt amendments to the 1965 Master Plan. They acknowledged that spatial planning had been mostly 'conceived as abstracted from social and economic development'<sup>17</sup> and the fact that Skopje's differences among communities had to be taken into account. They also admitted that the city had reached a 'critical phase', characterised by monocentrism and important disparities between urban areas. While the 1965 plan on paper contained some flaws, it would be unfair to reject it completely and attribute to it sole responsibility for today's problematic situation. The way it was implemented should also be seen as accountable to its outcomes. Moreover, post-earthquake planning may be considered a failure because of the insufficient, partial and problematic implementation of the 1965 Master Plan. It seems impossible not to notice the extension of informal settlements in Skopje today: yet, none of this type of housing was ever included in a project which planned the

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<sup>17</sup> *Urban Plan 1985 – Amendments and Additions*, City of Skopje

demolition of low-quality buildings and their replacement by modern ones. How may the gap between the project and the reality be explained?

The urban authorities did try to answer the substandard housing issue. However, the reconstruction of derelict urban areas has always been postponed in favour of 'higher' objectives. Despite the alarming predictions of the *Social Survey* that substandard areas would be a problem for social integration, priority was given to the areas envisioned in the Plan, such as new spaces outside the city. Following a Lefebvrian pattern according to which power needs monumentalised centres, priority was also given to the centre. Skopje's old areas, Lefebvre's 'peripheral elements', were not able to insert themselves into the city and were condemned either to crumble down or disappear from urban space. Twenty years after the Master Plan, urban authorities recognised<sup>18</sup> that the greatest housing deficit, due to the persistence of substandard housing, was on the left side of the Vardar – today's municipality of Čair. In many derelict areas, reconstruction had indeed been left to private initiative, and was hence undertaken according to the financial possibilities of their owners. Depriving the inhabitants of these areas of one of their essential rights, the right to the city, urban authorities were turning them into 'subjugated, exploited and dependent space' and the city into 'a collection of ghettos' (Lefebvre, 1978:85 and 1972:168).

Moreover, of the three squares planned in 1965, only the Marshal Tito Square on the right side was ever created. The second, planned on the opposite side, became a hub of illegal transportation adjoining a small informal market, and the third, the 'Republic Square' (which was supposed to become a unifying space on both sides of the Vardar), became a huge open space used as a parking for shopping facilities on the right bank and a church on the left. Similarly, the 1965 Plan had envisaged the construction of six centres in suburban areas, in order to balance the domination of the city centre, but none of them was ever realised. This absence of local centres was one of the main shortcomings of post-earthquake urban planning: it reinforced the dependence of the suburbs toward the city centre while encouraging spatial processes of division.

This incomplete implementation is not the main reason for the persistence of substandard housing in Skopje. The maintenance and extension of informal development are due to a lack of specific measures to counter this, but the absence of control by municipal powers is as much to blame. It is this that created the possibility

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<sup>18</sup> *Urban Plan 1985 – Amendments and Additions*, City of Skopje

for unplanned construction to occur. Only ten years after the earthquake, the conditions for Skopje's slumisation were present: the postponement of the reconstruction of older areas, the lack of work opportunities, problematic land speculation, and a difficultly controlled demographic boom – a combined effect of a high birth rate and a massive immigration. To Acevski (1996), the current ethnic structure of Skopje first appeared after WWII and was developed because of the intensive growth experienced by post-earthquake Skopje. Although I believe that the city's divisions rather took birth during the interwar period, I agree that they deeply increased after the war. Massive flows of migrants from different places in the Balkans enabled the settlement of populations of different cultural and ethnic origins. Some areas of Skopje already populated by Muslim communities expanded due to the arrival of new Muslim populations, leading to the formation of ethnically homogenous neighbourhoods in only a short period of time, such as Dizhonska or Bosniacka in Čair – places commonly referred to as 'ghettos' in present-day Skopje.

Rapid, uncontrolled urbanisation, in the absence of practical concern from the authorities, led to the degradation of many areas of the city. Instead of reducing the differences between urban communities, following socialist ideals, the lack of measures to handle the issue of substandard housing increased urban segregation. First, the city centre never became the unifying nucleus envisaged by the 1965 planners, but, to use the wording of Mijalkovic and Urbanek (2011:32), it was turned into 'no one's and everyone's non-place'. The Vardar barrier was not transformed into a lively space of exchange, but multiplied into many points of division. Second, in many urban areas left aside by planners in favour of the modern parts, the degradation of housing intensified. This decline of living conditions was combined by a process of intensive ethnic clustering in urban enclaves. These 'ghettos' evolved outside the general urban development and raise today the issue of both the city unity and its identity.

In 1985, urban authorities acknowledged the impossibility to predict any spatial development of housing, economic and social activities, because of the constant shrinking of open and public space due to illegal building. In contrast with what had been promoted so far – a 'differentiated' planning 'abstracted from social and economic development'<sup>19</sup> – they called for an 'integrated planning' which could combine social and environmental issues, and which would be based on the principles of 'self-

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<sup>19</sup> *Urban Plan 1985 – Amendments and Additions*, City of Skopje

planning'. While the new document placed the need to respond to the issue of degraded housing in poor areas as its first goal, it still preserved the same directions than the 1965 Plan. The dislocation of the Yugoslav Federation only a few years later put a stop to socialist urban policies and Skopje would have to wait until 2009 to have a new urban plan, at least, for the city centre – forty-four years after the last one.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter, I explored the processes at work in Skopje under socialism. I showed that dividing tendencies did not start under the Ottoman regime, but during the interwar. I pointed in particular at the role and responsibility of urban authorities in the creation of these division processes. By deliberately constructing the north side as the Ottoman/Muslim/non-Slavic/traditional city and the south side as the Yugoslav/Christian/Slavic/modern city, the Yugoslav elites used planning as a tool to affirm their own power, marginalise those who did not fit with their values and erase any traces from the past regime. Muslim and Roma populations were relegated in areas unconcerned by urban planning, while the new regime's ideals were displayed everywhere in the new city. When the earthquake occurred, the socialist authorities were aware of this legacy of urban divisions but they believed that socialist modernity would soon transform Skopje's inhabitants and lead to the blossoming of a new kind of society. By opting for supposedly *neutral* planning, they did nothing to alleviate the existing segregations, or to depoliticise and 'de-ethnicise' them. Their differentiated policies were far from being 'neutral' and, by choosing not to intervene in the north side, they *de facto* ratified a process that had begun in the previous decades. An emphasis on functional and technical criteria led the planners to address the symptoms and not the causes of urban problems.

This chapter aimed to cast light on the relation between the image of the divided city and its reality, and the role played by urban planning in the development of both issues. By deliberately investing only on the right side and leaving the left side to its own, interwar planners took part in the construction of the image of Skopje as a divided city. Not only was this image successful in shaping common representations and perceptions of Skopje as made of two fundamentally opposed areas, but it also impacted on the reality of urban divisions. Interwar policies indeed created and developed Skopje as a divided city, so that, when socialist planners have been in charge of rebuilding

Skopje, they could only acknowledge the existence of two separate zones. The previous regime had managed both to create the *image* of divisions and played an important role in the way they materialised in urban space. The neutral planning followed by socialist authorities only succeeded in exacerbating this divide. When Macedonia became independent in 1991, the process of division was already well-advanced and it would be taken to its – at least symbolic – paroxysm with the current reconstruction of the city centre.

## – CHAPTER 5 –

# THE CITY FROM ABOVE

This chapter explores examines the ‘city from above’, that is to say, how present-day Skopje is politically constructed as a divided city. I analyse how processes of division of urban space may be attributed to the urban policies of governing elites who use the city as a stage to assert their own representation of space and society. In section one, I briefly present elements of contextualisation to understand the political and social circumstances in which these policies were implemented, before focusing in particular on the Skopje 2014 project. In section two, I examine how this project seeks to rewrite history and invent national and urban memory. Finally, I analyse in section three the pillars on which the construction of a new Macedonian imagined community is based. I use Foucault’s analysis of discipline and Lefebvre’s ideas on hegemony and *conceived space* to analyse the on-going reconstruction of the city centre. I also draw on Sibley’s (1995) psychoanalytical perspective to understand how ethno-national narratives may produce images of difference and construct geographies of inclusion and exclusion in Skopje. Combining these perspectives allows me to examine how sectarian politics may resort to architecture and planning to divide urban space and society materially and symbolically. Together, these analytical frameworks help me to examine how dominant representations tend to turn the city into a mosaic of closed worlds and to dispossess its inhabitants of the right to the city.

My discussion here constitutes an original discussion of a project that is not yet completed and on which there is as yet no published academic work. Skopje 2014 replicates the geographic logic of nationalist politics that has reshaped the region. Yet, because of Macedonia’s belated ethnogenesis, it does so a century after its Balkan neighbours and at a quicker and more intense pace, acting as a magnifier of attempts to implement a nationalist representation of space. In term of urban political geography, this analysis draws attention on the processes that bring a city to division, by highlighting the role of political elites in such processes.



# 1 Skopje 2014 and spatial politics

## 1.1 Approaching current urban politics

Contemporary urban policies in Skopje appeared in a specific context, which was propitious for the rise of nationalism. The 1990s were synonymous with a deep economic crisis in Macedonia, directly in relation with the breakdown of Yugoslavia, the loss of the central authority's financial and structural support, and consequent economic restructuring. Macedonian nationalism, which was previously an element of cohesion within the Federation, began to disrupt it. A subsequent dispute with Greece over the name Macedonia, which led the international community to recognise the new state only two years after the independence, under the provisional name *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, amplified the popularity of nationalist themes among both ethnic Macedonians and Albanians. The strained economic situation resulting from the UN-embargo and the Kosovo refugee crisis of 1999, and the very high rate of may explain the attractiveness of nationalist ideas. The social and economic differences between Macedonians and Albanians were also been a factor of destabilisation.

While Albanian claims for more autonomy and better representation within the Federation were tempered under Tito, they intensified following his death, rapidly taking a nationalist dimension. Serbian and Macedonian nationalisms responded by denouncing the 'ethnic threat' in Kosovo and adjacent Macedonian regions. In Macedonia, the government's political propaganda was followed by police repression against the Albanian community. 'Differentiation', political lay-off and imprisonments, cultural and educational embargo, and suppression of Albanian schools accompanied with semantic restrictions, were the consequence of these policies (Iseni, 2008). The nationalist climate contributed to the ethnicisation of social relations in the 1980s and 1990s. From the 1991 ethno-national Constitution whose adoption was boycotted by the Albanian representatives to the Tetovo university crisis in 1994<sup>1</sup>, the Albanians have always sought to be better recognised and represented in the republic – thus directly challenging the ethnic Macedonians' exclusive rights to the state. Many Macedonians developed a grudge towards Albanians whom they felt still received much consideration from the state because of their minority status. The economic situation and international context also explains Macedonians' reluctance to relinquish their constitutionally and

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<sup>1</sup> The 1994 crisis showed the struggle surrounding the creation of an Albanian university in Tetovo, fiercely opposed by the Macedonian government. The shaky compromise eventually realized only reinforced the Albanian perception of themselves as second-class citizens.

politically guaranteed preferential rights. Although the short 2001 conflict between Macedonia's largest minority and the national government came as a shock for the international community, the claims expressed by Albanian fighters were therefore not unexpected.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement, which put an end to the conflict, enhanced the political and legal status of Albanians, while maintaining the unitary character of the state, to which the Macedonian representatives were fiercely attached. The revised Constitution still maintained the privileged status of the Macedonian Orthodox Church but mentioned other religious communities, and decentralisation was introduced. A compromise was achieved with the recognition of Albanian as a Republic's official language at the local level. Although it came about as a function of demographics, rather than as a symbolic recognition of equal status, it concerned a highly symbolical issue: with more than 20 percent of its population Albanian, the national capital itself, Skopje, would have to introduce bilingualism. A final but still major point concerned the iconographical sphere: members of all communities were granted the right to *'express, foster and develop their identity and community attributes, and to use their community symbols'*. Local authorities were authorised to place on front of local buildings emblems marking the identity of the majority community in the municipality. From now on, the Albanian flag could appear next to the Macedonian flag.

And yet, instead of having set the basis for a liberal nation building, the Framework Agreement has opted for a consociational model based on ethnic divisions. Lijphart (1977) developed the consociational model for societies with moderate differences and conflicts. In less peaceful situations, it may have negative effects, such as the fragmentation of a plural society into more homogeneous and self-contained elements, by 'locking' the individuals into specific ethnic identities. With the exclusion of other groups than the Macedonian and Albanian, the republic went from a Nation-state into a bi-ethnic state, in which ethnic identities are reified, essentialised and manipulated from above. Not only did the short conflict reveal the deep fracture of the Macedonian society, but it made sectarian ethno-nationalist attitudes common place in both the Macedonian and Albanian communities – and especially in their leaders' discourses. Nationalist claims were expressed more openly and became more popular than ever, with the right-wing party – then in power – VMRO-DPMNE at the forefront

of the nationalistic debate. Since 2001, the VMRO-DPMNE governments<sup>2</sup> have always openly showed their closed relations with the Orthodox Church and have constantly campaigned for the restoration of – carefully chosen – historical landmarks, to which I will return. In its manifesto for the 2008 election<sup>3</sup>, the Demo-Christian party placed traditional Christian values high in its politics of ‘cultural rebirth’, with the declared goal of reshaping the national narrative in order to preserve and nurture the national identity of ethnic Macedonians. As I will show, many elements of Skopje 2014 were also listed in the cultural rebirth section of this manifesto.

## 1.2 Skopje 2014

It is under these circumstances that the Municipality of Centre, supported by the central government, presented a new project for the city centre in February 2010, in the form of a short film entitled *Skopje 2014*.<sup>4</sup> Architecture is never used more than in periods of crisis (Dovey, 1999), and Skopje is here a good example. About half a century after the last urban plan, the city centre was to be totally reshaped. The film shows a project consisting of the reconstruction of the core central space of Skopje around the famous Macedonia Square. Central to this is the edification of neoclassical and baroque buildings and monuments that the political party in power, the VMRO-DPMNE, had placed high on its agenda for a ‘cultural rebirth’ of the Republic. From Alexander the Great to Tsar Samuil, (via the Orthodox Church and the ethnic Macedonian ‘defenders’ of the 2001 conflict) the ‘heroes’ of the new national Pantheon are present in the form of statues.

According to the first version of the project, more than 20 buildings were planned, including cultural institutions (including the National Theatre, the Museum of Archaeology, the Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestral Hall and the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle) and government buildings (notably the Criminal Court Building, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Financial Police Building, the New City Hall and the ‘Old’ City Hall). New bridges would be added, and existing ones renovated. The project also included plans to transform the façades of existing buildings in the city centre, the most famous (and controversial) being the Government building. About forty monuments were initially planned, including figures

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<sup>2</sup> From 1998 to 2002, and since 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *Programme for Rebirth of VMRO-DPMNE 2008-2012* (Програма за преродба на ВМРО-ДПМНЕ)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iybmt-iLysU>

from Justinian I to Goce Delčev, but their number and variety constantly increased from February 2010 onwards. As the project nears completion, the centre of the city has been dramatically reshaped in terms of a highly specific nationalist representation of space.

Most of the architects and designers of the buildings, monuments and statues have not been selected through national or international competitions, but were directly appointed by the government. In certain cases, competitions were organised, but were often criticised by other architects and activist groups for the limited room of manoeuvre left to the candidate projects and for a lack of fairness in selecting winners. Most of the people engaged in Skopje 2014 have been local Macedonian architects and artists, who were not particularly renowned before the start of the project. Some work came from abroad, such as that of Valentina Stevanovska, a Macedonian sculptor and author of Skopje's most famous statues, the fountains of Alexander the Great and of Philip of Macedon, which were cast in an Italian foundry.

A huge amount of money was put into the project and, receiving extensive media coverage, it rapidly gained popularity among ethnic Macedonians. While the government initially announced Skopje 2014 as a €80-million project, this figure has been questioned by many experts.<sup>5</sup> The total sum spent remains a mystery, especially since the project itself has often been updated and new components have been added. While the main opposition party, the SDSM, claims that Skopje 2014 costs more than €350 million, other sources refer to a sum of between €500 million and €1 billion.<sup>6</sup> For the first time since the beginning of the project, the government presented in April 2013 an official financial report revealing the fees paid to the sculptors<sup>7</sup>. The creator of some of the main statues of Skopje 2014 – such as Alexander the Great or Philip of Macedon and his wife – earned a €2.9 million salary. According to the government<sup>8</sup>, the total cost for the project so far is €208 million – again, an estimate widely criticised. A report<sup>9</sup> published by the Government Public Procurements Bureau mentioned an almost equal share in spending money between the ministry of Culture, the municipality of Centre

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<sup>5</sup> Balkan Insight, 'Secret Contracts hide Cost of Skopje Makeover', 14/09/2012, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/secret-contracts-hide-cost-of-skopje-makeover> [accessed: 02/11/12].

<sup>6</sup> Balkan Insight, 'Skopje 2014: The new face of Macedonia', 07/06/13, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/gallery/skopje-2014> [accessed: 02/09/13].

<sup>7</sup> Balkan Insight, 'Sculptors Earn Fortunes From Revamp of Skopje', 26/04/2013, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/skopje-revamp-has-made-sculptors-millionaires> [accessed: 01/05/2013].

<sup>8</sup> Balkan Insight, 'Macedonia Sets Skopje Revamp Cost at €208m', 23/04/2013, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/government-skopje-revamp-weighs-e2%3%A58-million> [accessed: 25/04/2013].

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

and the procurement bureau. However, a clarification of these costs may be expected soon, since the newly elected mayor of Skopje's municipality of Centre<sup>10</sup>, SDSM member Andrej Zernovski, an opponent and stark critic of the project, ordered in May 2013 a moratorium on all construction work and financial transactions linked with Skopje 2014. He also pledged an investigation into how the public funds have been spent, accusing the government and former mayor of money laundering<sup>11</sup>.

Nevertheless, these attempts might not be enough to stop the project. A report submitted by the municipal review commission tasked with probing the finances of the revamp was immediately dismissed by the government. Not only did the commission blame the previous mayor for having ignored the law and carried out projects that were not under his jurisdiction, it also accused the central government for having encouraged illegal conduct. The commission indicated that financial crimes often took place in the way statues and buildings were commissioned (with cases of statues planned to be cast in marble ending up being cast in cheaper bronze, even though the municipality paid for the marble).<sup>12</sup>

Having presented a brief review of the financial machinations surrounding the project, I will now identify and conceptualise the main themes evident in its design. Skopje 2014 has four main components: first, it is exclusive; second, it defines what is normal and distinguishes it from what is abnormal; third, it seeks to purify space through the erection of a collective psyche; fourth, it both controls space and uses space to control.

Skopje 2014 is ethno-nationally exclusivist. For its detractors, it simply denies the contribution of minority communities to Macedonian history and their existence as a constituent component of the Republic. Because, among others, the project includes

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<sup>10</sup> While the VMRO-DPMNE won the 2013 municipal elections in most localities, it lost Centre, home of the controversial revamp and a key bastion of the ruling party. After annulling the SDSM candidate's initial victory, the Macedonian administration ordered a re-run, sparking the resignation of Isamedin Limani, the head of the institution, who accused his colleagues of yielding to political pressure. Despite of the tense atmosphere and manifold irregularities noted by NGO observers, the SDSM won with over 3,000 votes, placing an opponent of the ruling party at the head of one of the country's most important municipalities.

<sup>11</sup> Balkan Insight, 'New mayor Halts Government's 'Skopje 2014' Revamp', 25/04/2013, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/new-mayor-pulls-brake-on-skopje-2%C3%A5aa4> [accessed: 02/05/2013]

<sup>12</sup> Balkan Insight, 'Probe Claims Skopje 2014 Project Broke Law', 13/08/2013, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/probe-of-skopje-2014-revamp-reveals-foul-play> [accessed: 19/08/2013]

only very few statues of non-Macedonian figures, and is mainly planned and financed by the Macedonian government, it exemplifies what Bollens (1998a, 1998b; 2002) calls a *partisan* strategy. I will use this concept to analyse how ambitious ethno-national entrepreneurs use urban planning as a way to assert their ideology – the result being an increasingly dividing city.

Authorities often use architecture and planning to remove potential threats and promote a normative conception of urban society, but in order for *normality* to be defined, *abnormality* must be defined first. Difference has to be framed, and, as a result, erased or expelled, for the contours of self-definition to be drawn and kept secure. In urban space, this means building walls. Yet, walls are only a first (visible and material) step in this enterprise, which, above all, means establishing boundaries and minimizing the threat of deviance to mainstream values and identity. In order to explore this process in the context of Skopje 2014, I will draw in the next chapter on Foucault's idea of planning as an *assemblage* for ensuring the allocation of inhabitants in the city, directing their moves and programming their interrelations.

These politics are also characterised by their attempt to create 'pure space'. By removing socialist marks from urban space, erecting only Macedonian statues, using marble and 'noble' material, marking space with religious symbols and hiding the Ottoman old town from view, I suggest that Skopje 2014's ethno-national leaders aim at constructing what Sibley (2005:86) calls a 'pure' or 'purified' space. While Sibley does not propose a definition of such space, the latter term designates a place where the presence of what is considered 'dirty' or 'dangerous' by a community is removed and excluded from it. The notion of 'purity' involves a moral and subjective judgement on what is good or bad. Separating is part of the process of *purification*: it is a means by which *pollution* is avoided. Sibley's psychoanalytical perspective on purity and exclusion enables me to link the materiality of physical walls and barriers with psychodynamic processes. As I will show, Skopje 2014 is characteristic of such an attempt of 'purification'. It aims at symbolically and spatially materialising a boundary between the 'self' and the 'Other' through a series of cultural representations. Material borders are erected in order to draw and enforce moral distinctions in the collective psyche. Macedonian ethno-national identity is defined and essentialised by the bricks and stones of Skopje 2014 and, at the same time, defended against unstable, 'deviant' and potentially contagious threats – non-Macedonian minorities.

Finally, this enterprise is also one of control. In a just a few years, Skopje's central space has changed dramatically (*figure 19*) and has become a way for political leaders to exercise their power over urban inhabitants. While drawing on Foucault and Sibley, I will also use Lefebvre's (1974:26) view of the city as a social product shaped by political and ideological systems that use space as a 'means of control, and hence of domination, of power'. In these terms, Skopje 2014 is an attempt to replace *lived space* – the space of its users – by *conceived space*, which furthermore involves establishing centre-periphery relations. In these, the centre is embodied by the ethnic Macedonian state which seeks to assert its own representation of space and identity over urban society, and attempts to do so by expelling and erasing all marginal elements that do not fit with its 'vision' and might resist its enterprise. Urban planning is here led by the wish to efface ambiguities and contradictions on which Skopje has been constructed, in order to become a 'whole' – an antique, European, Christian and bourgeois city that it has actually never been.

This also implies a rewriting of history. I will next examine how Skopje 2014 does not only erect walls but also constructs and even invents a past. I will then analyse how the construction of a collective psyche in relation to a new Macedonian imagined community is based on two main pillars: the army and religion.

## **2 The invention of memory**

According to Foucault and Lefebvre, space is a means for hegemonic powers to control and shape the way individuals experience, perceive and imagine their environment. Dominant representations are imposed on urban inhabitants, often in a manichean way (Sibley, 1995). Simplified narratives which deny the play of difference have a central role in spatial politics. Power produces knowledge that supports its agenda. History may be manipulated or transformed, certain events promoted or erased, with stereotyped representations materialised and symbolised in space. Hobsbawm (1983) defined the invention of tradition as resting upon three main instruments: the mass production of monuments, public ceremonies and primary education. As I will show, the Macedonian government has deployed each of these devices to serve its *partisan* planning strategy, for example in the extravagant celebrations for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of national independence.





Skopje city centre in 2009



Source: First Archi Brigade

Projection of Skopje city centre in 2014 (realised in 2010)



Source: skyscrapercity.com

The Macedonia Square in 2012

Realisation: O. Véron January 2013

Figure 19: Skopje 2014, before and after



Officially, the project aims to give Skopje the cultural heritage it supposedly lacks; re-establish a historical continuity disrupted by both the 1963 earthquake and the socialist period (one could add the Ottoman Empire); make the city a place suitable for tourism; and, above all, provide Macedonian society with a memory that is worth its importance and value. This agenda of cultural rebirth was made clear by the VMRO-DPMNE long before the project started<sup>13</sup>. Behind this argumentation lies the idea that, for the first time in its life, Macedonia deserves to be appreciated to the fullest. At the heart of this stands a need to shape memory. By imposing one urban memory for Skopje, the central authorities seek to eliminate other narratives and ‘peripheral’ elements which do not fit with the official vision. This results in a biased if not invented history of the past.

## 2.1 Socialism dismissed

Contrary to most Yugoslav and Eastern European states, Macedonia embarked only very lately on a significant revision of its socialist past. Though relatively untouched during the 1990s, more and more voices among the right wing began to blame this period as standing against national development and called for a removal of its legacies in urban space. Given that most socialist buildings and memorials had been totally neglected since the breakup of Yugoslavia, it was not difficult for the VMRO-DPMNE to argue for their replacement by new ones, thus ‘fill[ing] the empty and sterile socialist-era buildings and places’<sup>14</sup>. Both the earthquake and the functionalist planning that followed were commonly denounced as having disrupted the ‘natural’ development of the city – i.e. the architectural neoclassicism of the Serbian period. The main symbol of this disruption – the ‘facelessness’ of the empty central square (Lafazanovski, 2006) – was explained in terms of a lack of interest within the regime in promoting culture among Macedonian society. The most important task of the Skopje 2014 planners would be to fill this void, re-establish the connection with an idealised image of pre-socialist Skopje and reclaim urban space in the name of Macedonian cultural rebirth (*figure 20*). By doing so, they aim to recreate a form of historical continuity where the socialist narrative is considered a parenthesis in the life of the city.

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<sup>13</sup> *Programme for Rebirth of VMRO-DPMNE 2008-2012* (Програма за преродба на ВМРО-ДПМНЕ)

<sup>14</sup> Quotation from Pasko Kuzman, Macedonian director of the Bureau for Protection of Cultural Heritage (Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011)



a: the Square in 2008.

b: the Square in Summer 2011, when the Fountain was being built



Realisation: O. Véron January 2013

photos: O. Véron

Figure 20: Macedonia Square, before and during the construction period

A key episode in this rewriting of Macedonian history is the on-going renaming of Skopje's streets, with hundreds of new street names proposed by the VMRO-DPMNE and approved by the City council. The latter argued that 'many streets were named after people or events streaming from the old Communist ideology [...], there is no point in honouring bureaucrats from the past regime'<sup>15</sup>. Yet, removing the name of a street is not a neutral act. Street names act as a reminder of collective memory in urban space. Removing this historical and territorial marker means removing the memory of the historical figure who gave his/her name to the place and what he/she represents – here, the socialist era in Macedonia.

What has been erased must then be filled with new signifiers. The choice of new figures after whom the streets are named is also not neutral. The new names may carry a condemnation of the previous ones and the values associated with them. In this vein, some streets in Skopje were renamed after nationalists who were denounced as reactionary servants after WWII. The insertion of a street named 'Victims of Communism' epitomises this rewriting process. Such urban policies do not only rewrite history; they have an important role in present politics. The main opponent of the government, the SDSM, is descended from the reformed Communist Party, as is also Gruevski's direct adversary, Branko Crvenkovski, the SDSM's leader and former President of the republic. Publicly condemning the past regime is also an attempt to discredit and cast doubt on the historical legitimacy of the only political party that could take the VMRO-DPMNE's place at the head of the state.

Another aspect of this process of 'de-socialisation' in Skopje 2014 is the renovation of the state headquarters. In January 2012, the government used an internet poll to ask the population to choose a new facade for the modernist building erected in the 1970s, which was loosely inspired by traditional Macedonian Architecture. Among the five proposals pre-selected by the state, a design for a Baroque façade won the majority of votes. The announcement of the result sparked debate and the wrath of many architects, including that of the original architect of the building, Petar Mulickovski (*figure 21*).

Finally, a central element of this de-communisation undertaken by Skopje 2014 is the recently constructed Museum of Macedonian Struggle. This Museum, also

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<sup>15</sup> Balkan Insight, 'New Street Battle Splits Macedonia's Capital', 08/03/2012, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/new-kind-of-street-battle-grips-macedonia-s-capital> [accessed: 12/03/2012]





a: the government's headquarters in 2011

b: the new project



Realisation: O. Véron January 2013

Figure 21: When modernism meets baroque:  
a controversial makeover for the government headquarters

dubbed the Museum of the IMRO – in the name of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, an anti-Ottoman movement founded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to fight for a Macedonian state<sup>16</sup> – was built on the left bank, facing the Macedonia Square, and inaugurated in September 2011. The building houses a wax statue collection meant to illustrate the Macedonians' struggle for independence at the turn of the last century. As soon as the visitor enters the museum, the tone is set: collective guided tours are compulsory, individual visits are not allowed and neither are cameras. Given the small numbers of visitors, each person has to wait in the freshly constructed hall for a group to be constituted before starting the tour. The hall, clearly meant to be impressive, is decorated by huge neo-classical paintings depicting various moments of Macedonian history. Somewhat surprisingly, the narrative jumps from the pre-Ottoman Middle-Ages to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as if the Ottoman Empire had simply not existed.

The visit eventually starts: during a good hour and a half, the visitor will be fed a non-stop narrative of the 'official' history by the guide. Not only does this way of proceeding maintain visitors in a passive position, with little room for personal thought; it also prevents them from considering what is shown and, inversely, what is missing. It leaves almost no time for visitors to notice that, of a total of about forty statues, only three depict women, and just two Albanian figures – the latter being not even named by the guide, who mentions 'an Albanian poet' and 'an Albanian fighter', whereas detailed attention is paid to each ethnic Macedonian statue. This, added to the fact that explanatory signs are only written in Macedonian or English – something which runs against the legislation according to which Skopje is bilingual – gives the impression that Albanians are not welcomed in the museum, whether in the form of statues or as visitors. The explanatory texts are themselves contentious: *'Macedonian fighters bravely fought'* or *'Even if the enemies were ten times more numerous, Macedonians courageously pushed them back'*. These accounts are backed up by documents such as a map of 'ethnic Macedonia', comparing the present state borders with the 'reality' of ethnography, that is to say with Macedonia extending to Aegean Macedonia, in Greece, and Pirin Macedonia, in Bulgaria (*figure 22*) – a kind of map that appeared in the nationalistic climate of the 1990s and which can still be found in national museums and old history schoolbooks.

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<sup>16</sup> Contrary to what most nationalist leaders try to promote today, the main objective of the IMRO was not to claim a *national* state, but an autonomous multiethnic one. It is only later in the process of ethnogenesis that the idea of a Macedonian *nation* would emerge.



### A: 'The Balkan Peninsula before the Balkan Wars'

Taken from a 1992 Macedonian History textbook for the 8th grade, this map is designated to create the impression that the neighbouring states were acting in concert to encircle Macedonia.



Балканскиот Полуостров пред Балканските војни

### B: 'Foreign propaganda in Macedonia'

Taken from a 1992 Macedonian History textbook for the 9th grade, this map shows the students that a 'Great Macedonia' has suffered its neighbours' predatory intentions.



Source: E. Kofos, The Vision of 'Greater Macedonia', Thessaloniki, 1994

Туѓите пропаганди во Македонија



### C: The 'three Macedonias' divided by barbed wire

This map was widely distributed since 1993 by the nationalist Macedonian diaspora of Melbourne, who supported the 'United Macedonia' view.

Source: L.M. Danforth, 'Claims to Macedonian identity', Anthropology Today, 9/4 1993, 7. 5.

Figure 22: 1990s Macedonian nationalist maps

While two thirds of the museum feature the renaissance period (late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), the remaining third focuses on the ‘victims of communism’. The museum thus strives to present a discontinuous story of the national struggle as a coherent narrative. The complex socialist past is embodied by statues of nationalists persecuted by the authorities because of their fight for a Macedonian independent state. Visitors then enter a series of rooms showing the fate of these people: torture, jail, labour camps... Walls are covered with prisoners’ shovels and by paintings of acts of torture – a dramatic scenery which copies that of Holocaust memorials. The choice of such a parallel is contentious given that the extent of Macedonian post-war purges has been limited in both time and scope. While it is true that some opponents, including the first president of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, Metodija Andonov-Čento, have been prosecuted by the socialist regime, these purges only concerned a small number of members of the political elite, often sent to serve the Communist Party of Yugoslavia outside Macedonia, and few were actually imprisoned. Although, according to Rossos (2008), some people were sent to the Goli Otok camps – a political prison on an Adriatic island – in 1948, I could not find any confirmation of this information elsewhere or any mention that notable Macedonian prisoners might have been sent to this prison. Therefore, comparing the socialist purges in Macedonia with the genocide of eleven million people by the Nazis, as implicitly done by the museum, is quite a controversial act.

This is hardly the first time that a post-socialist state attempts to mark its difference from the previous regime: many other Eastern European states have endeavoured to remove this past from national memory (Esbenshade, 1995; Crowley, 2003; Lahusen, 2006). This includes selecting events, figures or buildings that are ‘worth’ remembering and that could serve the new identity narrative. The removal of public traces of socialism in urban space, along with official condemnations in a public institution such as a museum, show the effort to assert a particular representation of Macedonian history, with the young generations born after socialism being the most important target of such policies. Since independence, history schoolbooks have given a very biased version of Macedonian history, denying the importance of the socialist regime and providing an ethno-centred understanding of Macedonian national identity. With the old generations’ memories disappearing, Macedonian collective memory is gradually being replaced by the new cultural representations promoted by the Macedonian state since independence. These attain a high point in Skopje 2014. As I

will show later in the thesis, the younger generations of Macedonians are usually very supportive of the project: this support may be attributed to their immersion since birth in this constructed memory which is promoted by official institutions and most media. With Skopje 2014, this immersion takes on a new dimension: people are not only symbolically, but spatially and materially surrounded by this memory.

In Lefebvrian terms, such representation is conceived and constructed through the plans, designs and norms of urban authorities, which shape and control the social and physical environment experienced and lived by Skopjani. The space constructed by Skopje 2014 is invested by an ideology at the service of power, at the same time as it produces it. Not only does this ideological space define what is good and what is not but also what exists and what does not exist, i.e. it has both a moral and an ontological dimension. In the system imagined by the Macedonian authorities, there is no room for narratives other than the official one, as if they simply did or do not exist. The problem is that, once all socialist and Ottoman traces have been removed, there is not much left of Skopje's real past. The political solution is to provide the city and its society an official past, by imagining a new memory and constructing the urban heritage Skopje had, according to the state, been deprived of. Once the urban landscape is cleared of alternative and potentially threatening representations, the field is open for a dominant narrative to impose itself as self-evident and natural.

## **2.2 Alexander(s) the Great in Skopje: the antiquisation process**

A myth of antiquity has been placed at the heart of the government's project for Macedonia. It is based on the idea of the continuity of Macedonianness over the millennia and the belief that the origins of the modern Macedonian nation can be traced back to Alexander the Great and the ancient Kingdom of Macedon. Geographical continuity gives birth to historical continuity. Unfortunately, Greek nationalism claims the same memory and iconography and has an exclusivist view on the matter. This explains why the Greek state feels challenged in its rights over the symbolic capital of Ancient Macedonia and has reacted so strongly since the independence of the new Republic. Greece has always opposed the recognition of the state under the name 'Macedonia', claiming intellectual property of this name. According to Greek iconography, 'Macedonia' refers to the northern region of Greece, considered as the real fatherland of Alexander the Great. This dispute was followed by a dispute concerning



the national symbols chosen by the new republic: the tower of Salonica on the new Macedonian banknotes, and the Star of the Vergina on the national flag, the symbol of the ancient Macedonian kings. This iconographic conflict led Greece to declare an embargo on Macedonia and use all its diplomatic power within the European Union to prevent the recognition of the new state. This explains why recognition came two years after the proclamation of the republic, under the provisional name 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'. The right to use its national flag was also denied by the international community, despite Macedonia having entered the UN. This iconographic dispute remains unresolved today, as Greece still blocks Macedonia's NATO bid and hinders European integration. As I will show, Skopje 2014 is likely to further infuriate Macedonia's neighbour through the central place attributed to the myth of antiquity embedded in the project.

The myth of Macedonian antiquity has marked the spaces of Skopje. Instead of the dominant Slavic narrative on which Macedonian nationalism – and the SDSM's discourse – was traditionally based, the new self-definition of the nation is built upon *antiquisation*. This term, now officially used, has designated a policy pursued by the VMRO-DPMNE since 2006. This policy is based on the claim that ethnic Macedonians are not related to the Slavs but are direct descendents of the ancient Macedonians. The first edition of the *History of Macedonian People*, published during socialism, traced the roots of the Macedonian nation back in antiquity (Brunnbauer, 2005), but it is only recently that this idea has been taken forward. Since 1945, the official Macedonian historical narrative was, rather, based on the idea that the Slavs assimilated the local populations when they settled in the Balkans – respectively, Ancient Macedonians in today's Macedonia and Thracians in Bulgaria. Contrary to the Slav narrative, antiquisation enables Macedonia to claim its legitimacy as a separate nation from its neighbours.

Until Skopje 2014, the antiquisation project had been a rather limited process. Classical statues were put in front of the seat of the central government, Skopje's main stadium was renamed 'Philip II Arena' and one of the main squares was recalled 'Pella Square', after Pella, the ancient kingdom of Macedon's capital. The main motorway was also renamed 'Alexander Makedonski'<sup>17</sup>, and so was the airport where feature antique objects from Skopje's archaeological museum were moved.

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<sup>17</sup> 'Alexander of Macedon' or 'Alexander of Macedonia', as he is called in Macedonia.

However, this antiquisation took a new massive dimension with Skopje 2014. Since no existing building in the city evokes a collective memory that fits with the state's plan, the government gave a preponderant role to the antiquity myth and Alexander the Great in its urban project by starting to erect 'new ancient' monuments in Skopje. The aim was to make Skopje similar to ancient cities and, above all, give the city a historical continuity it had allegedly been deprived of by the Ottoman Empire and socialism. This resulted in the creation of fake 'classical' buildings and monuments of 'antique' style everywhere in the city centre. Neo-classical buildings – such as the complex hosting the Courthouse, Archaeological Museum and the Archives of Macedonia (*figure 23*) – manifold sculptures, a triumphal arch and, above all, two massive fountains topped by huge statues of, respectively, Alexander the Great – the project's centre piece – on Macedonia Square, and his father Philip just before entering the Čaršija, were therefore established in the perimeter of Skopje's city centre.

Architecture can be an effective way to legitimise authority, assert an ideology, and protect an identity. When paired with symbolic content that echoes within collective memory, the result is likely to be even more powerful. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Macedonia has sought to demarcate itself from its Slavic neighbours by resorting to the myth of Alexander the Great – to the anger of neighbouring Greece who claims the monopoly on the latter. Their iconographic dispute has left deep traces among the Macedonian population who strongly resent the impossibility of recognition under the name 'Republic of Macedonia'. Consequently, the myth of Alexander the Great as the forefather of the nation has served as a symbol of the national struggle for the right of Macedonia to claim its legitimacy and those who dared criticise or question this narrative were labelled 'spies' or 'traitors', as has been, for example, the head of the Open Society Institute in Skopje, Vladimir Milcin, a strong critic of Gruevski's government.<sup>18</sup>

For Sibley, such stereotyping mechanisms play a major role in defining the self. It makes it seem more stable at the same time as it maintains its boundaries. This manichean perception of the world as made of 'heroes' and 'traitors' is visible in the statues and monuments of Skopje 2014. The first dimension of this cultural representation lies in the selection of historical figures represented in the project. I will return to the absences from Skopje 2014, those who have not inspired statues or specific

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<sup>18</sup> Balkan Insight, 'Macedonian "spy" says he is victim of witch hunt', 26/07/11, [https://www.google.com/search?q=Macedonian+%27Spy%27+Says+he+is+Victim+of+Witch+Hunt&gws\\_rd=ssl](https://www.google.com/search?q=Macedonian+%27Spy%27+Says+he+is+Victim+of+Witch+Hunt&gws_rd=ssl) (accessed 04/08/2011)



a: the complex of the Courthouse, Archaeological Museum and the Archives of Macedonia



b: the Gemidzii



c: view on the Stone bridge and on the complex's developments on the Vardar



c: the future Officer's Club, facing the complex



photos: O. Véron

Realisation: O. Véron January 2013

Figure 23: The riverbanks as a construction site

buildings, later in my analysis. Before doing so, I will analyse the second key dimension of Skopje 2014: the treatment of heroes and the choice of colours and materials.

Most statues and monuments in Skopje 2014 are made of white marble, bronze or gold-plate, and most buildings are white with cream-coloured elements. The choice of these materials is not neutral. Marble, bronze or gold are seen in most cultures as 'noble' materials: marble is usually associated with eternity, bronze with royalty and hierarchy, and gold with perfection, light and masculinity. The use of colours as a marker of difference is present in all cultures: in Western symbolism, whiteness is often associated with *purity*, and also spirituality, peace and life. Whiteness has also a strong Christian connotation. It is a symbol of sanctity (white is the Papacy's colour). It is associated with innocence in the Bible with the image of the lamb, sacrificed to expiate sins. The white lily, the Virgin's attribute, is a flower of innocence and chastity. Whiteness also symbolises the *beginning*: light appears at the very start of the Creation, children wear white for their baptism and first communion, the Christ is usually portrayed in white after his resurrection.<sup>19</sup> Finally, white is also associated with *cleanliness*: this is an essential component of Sibley's psychoanalytical perspective and understanding of 'pure space'. Objects are expected to be clean, i.e. white: stains can easily mar this purity and *pollute* it – a key dimension in Skopje's urban policies, as I will show later.

Skopje 2014's centrepiece, the statue of Alexander the Great, combines *all* these symbolic materials and colours: it is made of bronze and marble, and its colours are gold and white. The symbolic capital of Alexander the Great is multiple. First, it has a universal value that could be used in forging myths by many world communities. The image of a military, yet humane, civilising conquest which spread Hellenism through barbarian lands inspired both the Enlightenment and Orientalism. Second, in Macedonia, it also enables the re-establishment of an historical continuity with the past, which had been broken by the Slavic legacy, and a demonstration of the purity of the uninterrupted ethnogenesis of the Macedonian nation. Moreover, it proposes a Golden Age – the glorious era of the antique Macedonian Empire – to reclaim and an ideal to identify with and strive for. Above all, because it assumes that Macedonians are aboriginal to the land, it asserts the legitimacy and authenticity of their territorial claims. This image is all the more compelling as it comes in a period of social, economic and

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<sup>19</sup> See for example paintings of Fra Angelico (1440), Bellini (1475), Bramantino (1490), Borgognone (1510) or Rubens (1611).

identity crisis. Not only do these ‘antique’ roots allow ethnic Macedonians to break with their Slavic neighbours and affirm the uniqueness of their lineage, but it also enables them to disregard the Ottoman era as a period of discontinuity that only impeded the natural development of the Macedonian nation. In that respect, Pasko Kuzman, the Director of the Cultural Heritage Protection Office, declared:

We did not skip the Middle Ages, but there were simply no Macedonian characters from this time [...] Macedonia was under the five-century-long rule of the Turks... so, everything that we’ve reserved comes from Ancient Macedonia. [...] Even the Prime Minister asked me once, ‘Did we go over the top with the Ancient characters and neglect the Slavic ones?’ I replied by asking him to name me one character from that time and we would include it. But there aren’t any.<sup>20</sup>

The masterpiece of this antiquisation process is the fountain of Alexander the Great on the Macedonia square (*figure 24*). It is a monument which lies at the basis of the new Macedonian identity – an identity celebrating the army and the religion. I will now analyse these aspects in more details.

### **3 The new Macedonian imagined community**

Although Anderson’s (1983) theory of *imagined communities* and Lefebvre’s concept of *conceived space* have not often been associated, they have much in common, as appears with Skopje 2014. To Anderson, an imagined community is a mental image, created by political institutions and media, and without any connection with the real life of community’s members. Lefebvre’s *conceived space* is a mental space conceptualised by governing elites and planners, and disconnected from the *lived space* of urban inhabitants. Although the two concepts do not have the same spatial dimension, both are dominant representations designed from above and imposed on a public to shape its social representations and identity. Anderson analyses nation-building as the development of a cultural memory, based on an immemorial past, preserved and essentialised in the present, and envisioned into a limitless future. This imagined memory is materialised in the space conceived by urban authorities, as it is the case with Skopje 2014, where mythic cultural representations are put forward to shape the

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<sup>20</sup> Balkan Insight, ‘Macedonia’s ‘Indiana Jone’s Scorns Retiring at 65’, 17/11/12, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-s-indiana-jones-scorns-retiring-at-65>, (accessed 19/11/2012)





Figure 24: The Warrior on the Horse Fountain

contours of a timeless Macedonian community and reinforce its cohesion, as I will examine in this section.

### 3.1 A military and gendered narrative

The military occupies an important place in Foucault's theoretical perspectives. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), he argues that the use of discipline emerged in the army. The development of permanent armies led to a resort to discipline as a means of increasing adherence of soldiers to the chain of command. In those modern armies, the self came to be replaced by the automaton, characterised by a passive dependence upon authority. Military science perceived the body as a physical device easy to handle and able to follow pre-determined directions. This newly rationalised army could show this internal order during military parades, the official and ideal presentation of the disciplined army. The military likewise occupies a major place in the disciplinary narrative of Skopje 2014. The project indeed aims at reconstructing the city along militarised and gendered lines, which I explore here.

In June, 2011, a 14.5-meter and 30-ton equestrian bronze statue of Alexander the Great was lifted and placed on a 15-meter high pedestal in the central square of Skopje. Two months later, just in time for the celebrations of the 20-year anniversary of Macedonian independence, the fountain of Alexander the Great was revealed to the public. In order not to upset Greek opinion, this statue was formally entitled *Warrior on a horse*. Similarly, the 29-metre statue of Philip of Macedon, also surrounded by a fountain and erected on the other side of the Vardar a year later, was called *Warrior with accompanying elements*. Yet, it is almost impossible to miss what the two statues stand for. All the emblems of ancient Macedon are present: the star of the Vergina on the surrounding statues of soldiers' shield, the arms and military uniform of both these soldiers and the Warriors which are typical of ancient Macedonia, or even the rearing horse of Alexander which is reminiscent of the fierce Bucephalus. Above all, the government itself, local and international media, and the city's population had used the names of Alexander and Philip long before the monuments were actually erected. As the statue of Alexander was raised, many people gathered on the square welcomed the new monument with happy shouts and tears of joy. The exclamations themselves are quite indicative of what the statue stands for: *'Finally, Alexander is back'*, *'This is a historic day for Macedonia!'*, *'It was so much needed!'* or *'We are so proud of Alexander, the*

*symbol of our identity*'.<sup>21</sup> They are also telling of the effectiveness of antiquisation since everybody is able to recognise the figure of Alexander and spontaneously acknowledge his central role in Macedonian identity (*figure 25*).

The statue itself of Alexander is reminiscent of Foucault's view on the *Panopticon*. The *Panopticon* was initially a type of building designed by the philosopher Bentham in which a single watchman was to observe all the inmates of an institution, without any of them being able to know when they are watched or not. This results in the prisoners having to act as if they were being watched all the time and their practices being all the time under control. Foucault (1975) saw the *Panopticon* as a metaphor and an ideal architectural figure of modern disciplinary power. No chains are needed to dominate a population, but only this consciousness of permanent visibility. Visuality is also central to the monument of Alexander the Great. It is located at the centre of the central square, that is to say Skopje's spatial, cultural, economic and political centre. Alexander is literally surrounded by Macedonian warriors who leant against the central column and face the central square. Since they are looking in all directions, walking on the square gives the impression that the eyes of these warriors, half hidden beneath their helmets, constantly follow you. The fact that they are raised two meters above the ground and are bigger in size than actual human beings adds a sense of superiority. This impression of being watched reaches a high point with the huge statue of Alexander. With his eyes at 25 meters from the ground and his posture on a rearing horse and raising a sword, the statue reinforces the sense of highness and power. High above the surrounding buildings, Alexander watches the city and its inhabitants. He epitomises the state and its control over the population, ready to attack and pounce on anyone who would challenge the almighty state. Alexander and his warriors are themselves surrounded by the other buildings which are part of Skopje 2014, so that the citizens are caught between Alexander's gaze and that of the other statues, as in a game of mirrors.

Yet, there is more here than panopticism: the citizens do not only act as if they were constantly watched, without being able to see their watchers, they also see the state seeing them. They are constantly reminded that they are both part of and subject of the state, but this bond does not simply impose itself from the centre, as in the *Panopticon*, its strategy is more subtle. The presence of Alexander the Great surrounded by its

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<sup>21</sup> Street interviews, June 2011.





Figure 25: The Warrior on the Horse Fountain - details

warriors and by other figures of national historiography appeals to a narrative familiar to the Macedonians who cross the Square, especially the young generations. These elements are the material embodiment of what they have learned at school, in history books, in national museums and on local media. The monuments echo deeply rooted feelings, such as attachment to their homeland and religious beliefs, which not only come to life on the space surrounding them, but do so in a majestic and imposing manner, meant to inspire both pride and pleasure. Lefebvre (1974:224) argued that monumental space generates a sense of its own 'ownership': 'such a space is determined by what may take place there, and consequently by what may not take place there'. In a period of crisis, arousing these kinds of intimate and comforting emotions is a potent way to increase public engagement and forge popular support for governing policies.

A short walk around the city centre is enough to understand the importance of the military narrative in the new urban landscape. Few are the statues devoid of military connotations. At the foot of the fountain of Alexander, a statue of tsar Samuil, an 11<sup>th</sup> century military leader famous for having extended his Kingdom in the region, has been erected. A few hundred meters further, a Triumph Arch stands: the monument was a masterpiece of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence, when it was inaugurated even before having been finished. On September, 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011, this special anniversary was celebrated with great fanfare by the regime – at the same time as it was boycotted by the opposition who saw it as a mere promotion of Skopje 2014<sup>22</sup>. For the first time since the independence of the country, a military parade was organised<sup>23</sup>. The star of the military show – in which women were conspicuously absent – was a special forces regiment. Composed of men in red and black uniforms (the official colours of the VMRO-DPMNE) wearing a red and black make-up reminiscent of that of Darth Maul in Star Wars, the regiment was meant to impress and inspire awe among viewers. This use of the ruling party's symbolic colours is telling of the intermingling of the Party and the Army, as in fascist or socialist regimes where the Party is one with the State. The army does not belong to the nation only, but to the Party: it is a political army. The celebration was a grand show centred on the main new monuments. It began with the parade marching under the new triumphal arch and with the inauguration of the Museum of Macedonian Struggle, where the Macedonian President, Gjorge Ivanov,

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<sup>22</sup> *Utrinski Vesnik*, 'Was the SDSM wrong not to go?' ('Згреша ли СДСМ што не дојде?'), n°3677, 10/09/11.

<sup>23</sup> Fieldwork, Skopje, September 2011.

placed the declaration of independence and in front of which actors performed events of Macedonian history. VMRO-DPMNE politicians were then welcomed on Macedonia Square by famous national singers singing patriotic songs, as well as the national ballet and national folk dancing company performing a musical called 'Macedonium'. The evening culminated with a speech of Gruevski, vowing not to change the name of the country despite international pressure and calling for Macedonian unity, immediately followed by the unveiling of the statue of Alexander the Great. The event massively drew the crowds, with more than a thousand Macedonians attending the event<sup>24</sup>. It was a key moment in the promotion campaign of Skopje 2014 and the representation of Macedonian society it promotes.

Skopje 2014 included a monument entitled *The Defenders* commemorating the ethnic Macedonian fighters who died in 2001. The inclusion of this recent memory in a complex dedicated to the history of the national struggle is a highly controversial act. The choice of one event/figure to celebrate rather than another is a choice of what to remember and what to forget. Instead of celebrating the soldiers who fought against the Albanian insurgents, the monument could have remembered the Ohrid Agreement which put an end to the hostilities and set the basis for a multiethnic state. It therefore constructs the memory of 2001 in a very biased way. This decision celebrates Macedonia's military roots, along with the ideas of heroism and sacrifice of Macedonians, as opposed to the Albanian insurgents. This monument was erected in the Park of Women Fighters. In the socialist regime, this place was dedicated to women who fought in the WWII antifascist struggle. However, more and more statues of male figures continue to be erected there, changing the ratio of women in favour of men. In fact, the only female figures included in Skopje 2014 are statues of *shmizli* – pretty but superficial and often promiscuous women – aimed at epitomising the 'typical' young Skopje woman. Hence the project to overwrite the presence of female statues by an inflation of male statues, and impose a new feminine figure: the *shmizla*, beautiful in appearance, but with no remarkable substance. Skopje 2014 offers a particularly gendered reading of national memory and identity: women are to be pretty, men are to be heroes.

This dimension echoes Sibley's views on the relation between gender, politics and knowledge. As part of a hegemonic culture, knowledge may be gendered and used

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<sup>24</sup> Balkan Insight, 'Thousands turn out for Independence Day celebrations', 09/09/2011, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/thousands-turn-out-for-macedonia-independence-day-celebrations> [accessed: 12/09/2011]

to maintain power and domination by men. This is exactly what is happening with Skopje 2014. Through the revamping of the city centre, the central authorities impose their own narrative as ‘official knowledge’, with the help of historians and archaeologists such as Pasko Kuzman (cited above), hired to support these representations. Unprovable assumptions and claims on Macedonia’s ‘antique’ past are presented as scientific and historic facts. The knowledge which emerges from this project reveals how gendered politics and (pseudo-)science, may interrelate to construct a vision of a masculine and military society. By hijacking the meaning of a place dedicated to women fighters and filling it with a new set of symbols characterised by a classical nationalist gender stereotype, the Macedonian authorities propose a narrative where women’s power and knowledge have no place. Men are the fathers, sons and protectors of the nation, while women are not even glorified as the ‘mothers’ of the nation: they are either absent or superficial. Their contribution to the struggle for independence and the process of nation-building is simply denied. Not only does this narrative forget the role of women in Macedonian history, it does so purposefully and chooses to relegate them to an inferior position. Skopje, as shaped by this hegemonic representation, is a masculinist as well as nationalist city.

The military dimension of Skopje 2014 is also indirect, in the form of a militarisation of non-military elements. First, the project highlights paramilitary components, with a monument on the square dedicated to the *Gemidjas*, a group of Salonica terrorists who organised sabotages against the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Second, it represents non-military figures in a military fashion. Close to the *Gemidjas*, statues of the national heroes, Goce Delčev and Dame Gruev, have been erected at the foot of the Stone Bridge. These two figures – who also happen to be regarded as national heroes by Bulgaria – were revolutionaries and among the founders of the IMRO. Nevertheless, they were intellectuals rather than fighters (Goce Delčev probably never held a gun or rode a horse in his whole life). Yet, their statues have a military dimension: both are riding horses and carry guns. The same military elements can be found in the statue of Nikola Karev, a politician. His representation on a horseback tends to minimise the intellectual nature of its struggle by turning him into a military leader (*figure 26c*). Through these statues, the military sphere extends to the paramilitary and even the intellectual sphere. All of them symbolically serve the same goal: fighting for Macedonian identity and protecting it against potential intrusions or threats.



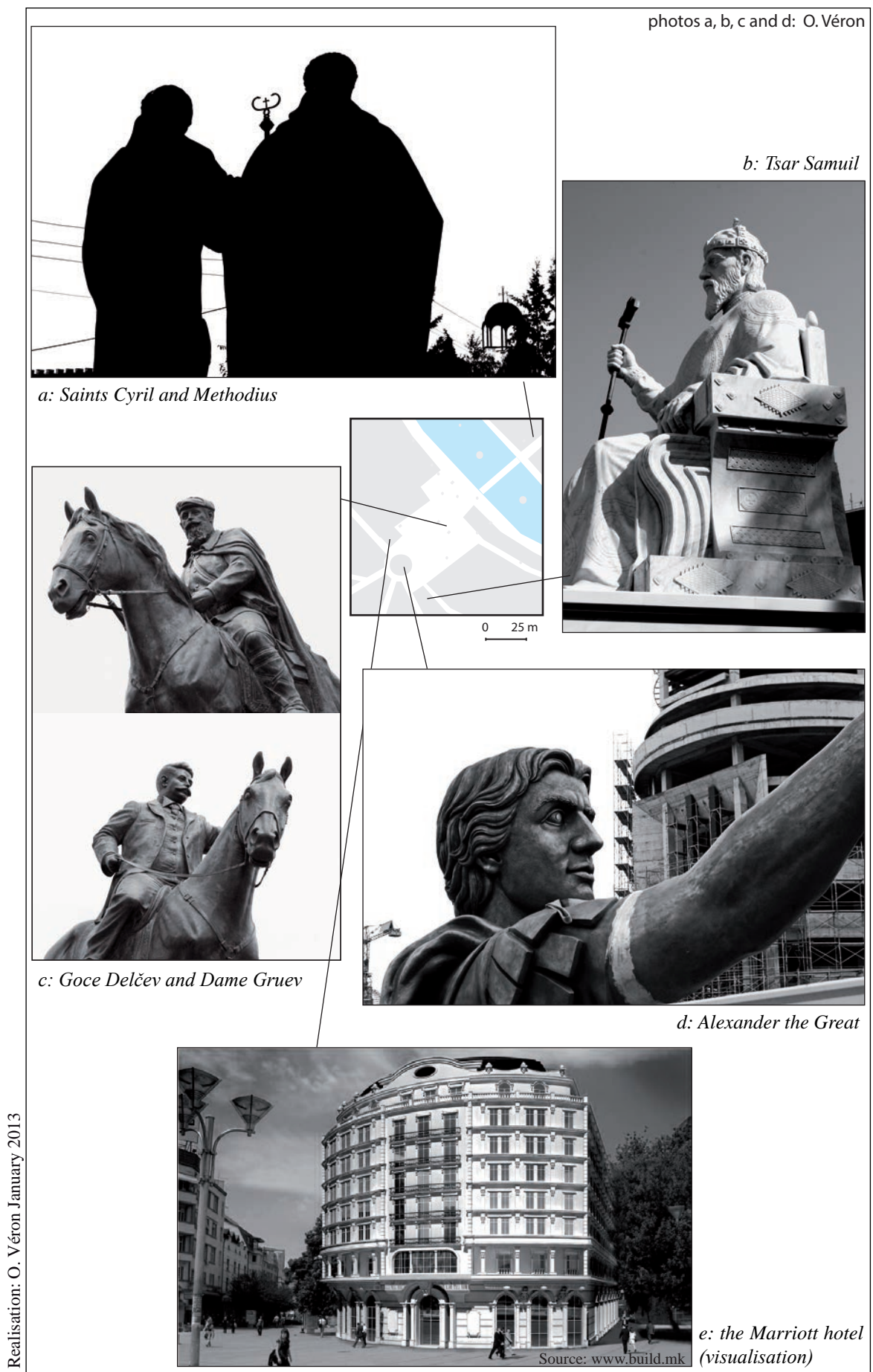


Figure 24: the Army, the Capital and the Religion: the three pillars of power

The collusion between culture, the military and the political is also present in the monument honouring the Fallen Heroes of Macedonia, whose spatial proximity to the Parliament is not a coincidence. In front of a circular building, reminiscent of a classical Greek temple, topped by a goddess statue symbolising victory, stands a detached entrance of white columns with gold rearing horses at their summit. A statue of Prometheus who, according to Greek mythology, stole fire from the gods, has been erected beside the columns, as the centre of a new fountain. Prometheus was first represented naked, but after complaints – allegedly of women’s organisations – he was given bronze underwear. The whole monument is a memorial to the Unknown Soldier with an eternal flame, but it also celebrates military successes with the Victory statue. The mixed symbols of this imagery (Prometheus, the Greek temple, the Unknown Soldier and the Victory statue) show the ambivalent relation to memory put forward by Skopje 2014. The monument of the Unknown Soldier usually pays a tribute to those who gave their life for the fatherland. In this context, it also highlights the military origin of the Macedonian nation, as the figure of Prometheus symbolises the intelligence of this nation, opposing blind obedience and bringing instead knowledge and hope to humanity. In Greek mythology, Prometheus is victim of the arbitrary punishment of Zeus, as is, in Macedonian historiography, the republic victim of greedy neighbours and unjust international decisions which deny Macedonia’s right to national iconography and official recognition.

This monument has been central to at least two occasions. First, it was inaugurated on the occasion of Macedonia’s Independence Day in 2012. The eternal flame was lit by the Prime Minister and leader of the VMRO-DPMNE, Nikola Gruevski. The monument was also central to the first Macedonian video clip for Eurovision 2013. This song<sup>25</sup>, strongly criticised on social networks as a tragic-comic advert for the government’s project<sup>26</sup>, was later replaced by another one with the same singers. The very title, *Empire (Imperija)* immediately recalled the Empire of Alexander the Great. The clip starts with a view of the fountain of Alexander, goes on with scenes filmed in the Museum of Macedonian Struggle and views of Skopje 2014’s buildings (the Triumphal Arch, the complex hosting the Courthouse, Archaeological Museum and

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<sup>25</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2A\\_iDciMPvc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2A_iDciMPvc)

<sup>26</sup> Balkan Insight, ‘Macedonia Red Faced Over Eurosong Debacle’

01/03/2013, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-eurosong-video-causes-furor> [accessed: 12/03/2013]

the Archives of Macedonia, and the National Theatre) and ends on the monument for the Fallen Heroes of Macedonia.

The lyrics refer to the 'Empire' of music, but this is not what is really being evoked. If the word 'music' is replaced by 'Macedonia' (which starts with the same letter), they take on a new meaning: *'I walk, I walk through the skies / I fly through the times, / And when I fall asleep / I dream of Macedonia / Our beautiful songs / Life is Macedonia, / Energy our Empire. / Empire, Empire, / Earth's a Macedonian Kingdom / Empire, Empire, the strongest power on Earth... / When the whole universe sleeps, / I sing in the night, / I reach for the stars, / With wings of Macedonian notes'*. References to a timeless Golden Age are present from the beginning with the ideas of 'walking through the skies' and 'flying through the times'. The Empire is not only a reality ('Earth') but a 'dream' whose lexical field develops through the whole song. The protagonist 'walks' and 'flies' through the 'skies' – an element which is also reminiscent of the Christian notion of Heaven – and, thanks to his 'wings' – which remind us of those of an angel – he 'reaches the stars', i.e. the greatest reward for a good believer. The notion of a supreme power of the Empire over the world is epitomised in the fusion of 'Earth' and the 'Macedonian Kingdom', since the whole world becomes part of Macedonia whose empire is 'the strongest power on Earth' – one could add the 'whole universe'. The Macedonian empire is a universal and eternal entity, whose power even 'reaches the stars'. The song has a strong beat and the refrain 'Empire' is hammered as it would be in military music. The new Macedonian identity shaped by Skopje 2014 does not only have a military dimension: as seen in this short text analysis, Christianity is also central to it. Most of all, this song shows that Macedonian nationalism's *conceived space* is effective and embodied, as well as cognitive and symbolic.

### **3.2 The Nation and the Cross**

Christianity is an important part of the series of cultural representations at the centre of the new narrative for Skopje. In this manichean representation of society, Christianity is opposed to Islam. This opposition frames the boundaries between the (Christian) Self and the (Islamic) Other. The definition of the Other extends the usual limits of Islam: actually, any non-Christian Self is automatically classified as an Other (including non-Macedonian populations who are not necessarily Muslim, such as the Roma).

These mechanisms of religious identification and rejection already existed in Skopje during the interwar period: as I showed, the image of the divided city was constructed by the Serbian regime during this period. For almost half a century, religious values were replaced by those of socialism, and the Church by the Party. With the end of socialism, there has been a resurgence religion in Macedonian politics. It became an essential component of the right-wing government's policy to mark the difference with both the previous regime and the SDSM, and to reclaim the space left by socialism. The new political elite resorted to religion to fill the physical as much as spiritual void created by the end of socialism: the moral construction of Macedonian imagined community implied the material construction of religious buildings and territorial markers. As emphasised by Popovikj, by erecting churches,

the producers of such spaces thus acquire the power of the space. The role of builders, and more precisely church-builders, is therefore translated in the role of nation builders, from which, the establishment is the entitled to the moral authority to lead the country (2010:18).

Skopje 2014 was not the first open attempt of the state at imposing its representation of urban space and national identity. Macedonian central authorities had already stirred a tremendous controversy just before 2000, when the government initiated a project to erect a 'Millennium Cross' on top of the mountain which overlooks the city, in order to celebrate the anniversary of two millennia of Christianity in the country. It took two more years for the 66-meter-high steel cross to be constructed at the top of Vodno on a place known since the Ottoman Empire as *Krstovar* ('Place of the cross'), where another, much smaller cross, used to stand. The Cross soon became a visible landmark for the city and its surroundings, especially at night, when it is lit up. It triggered many controversies and was criticised by the opposition and local media for the collusion between the state and the church it implied. Because the Macedonian Orthodox Church was unable to collect all the money required to finance construction, even with donations from the Macedonian diaspora, the VMRO-DPMNE-led government financially supported the project. This public finance led critics of the project to seek legal recourse and use the constitutional provision which asserts that the state is separate from the Church<sup>27</sup>. Not only was this collusion problematic in terms of state secularity

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<sup>27</sup> Although the Macedonian Orthodox Church had a privileged status in the pre-2001 Constitution (Article 19 referred to '*the Macedonian Orthodox Church and other religious communities and groups*'), the republic was officially secular and guaranteed the freedom of religious confession and the right to express one's faith.



but, more importantly, it denied the multi-confessional composition of a society where Muslims comprise a third of the population. With Skopje 2014, this religious narrative was carried a step further.

Some of the new statues in the city centre carry strong religious – Christian – connotations. The Tsar Samuil (an object of dispute between Macedonia and Bulgaria, which considers him Bulgarian) was among the first historical figures to be represented on the main square (*figure 26b*). He is famous, not only for his military prowess, but for having spread Christianity in the region and as far as Transylvania. His statue is made of white marble, which, as I showed, carries a particular significance in the Christian symbolism. He is represented with a crown topped by a Christian cross and is holding a sceptre topped by an encircled Greek cross (an invented combination between a Greek cross, as used by Eastern Orthodoxy and Early Christianity, and a simplified Celtic cross, adopted by some white nationalist and neo-fascist groups in Western Europe). His statue is mirrored on the other side of the square by one of Justinian I, commonly known as Justinian the Great. A Byzantine emperor, he is one of the most important figures of Late Antiquity and considered a saint by Eastern Orthodox Christians. His reign marked a blossoming of Byzantine culture and Christianity, accompanied by a great religious building activity<sup>28</sup>. Justinian's religious policy was based on the idea that the Empire's unity presupposed unity of faith – which could only be Orthodox. He endeavoured to eradicate paganism in his empire by forcing people to accept Christianity, and persecuted those who resisted conversion, such as the Manicheans. He also placed every independent non-Orthodox institution (such as the Athens Neoplatonic Academy) under state control, restricted the civil rights of Jews in the empire and interfered in the internal affairs of the synagogue. As with Samuil, the statue of Justinian in Skopje is made of white marble with bronze reliefs. His importance is highlighted by the placement of his throne on a 3.5-meter tall pedestal, as is Samuil. From the choice of the historical figures to the magnificence and centrality of their location, every element here shows the central role attributed to Christian faith in the Macedonian community imagined by Skopje 2014.

In its 2008 election program<sup>29</sup>, the VMRO-DPMNE presented its project to build an Orthodox church on Macedonia Square. Following the idea that Skopje could not be

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<sup>28</sup> It is under Justinian's reign that the church of Hagia Sophia was erected in Constantinople: it remained the centre of Eastern Orthodox Christianity for centuries.

<sup>29</sup> *Programme for Rebirth of VMRO-DPMNE 2008-2012* (Програма за преродба на ВМРО-ДПМНЕ)

a European city if its centre lacks a church, the project included the reconstruction of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helena. This had replaced the Burmalı Mosque, which had been torn down in the 1920s but was destroyed by the earthquake. Skopje 2014 also relocated the church, which was originally some 150 metres from the square. The reconstruction of the Church soon became the most controversial issue of the project (as I will discuss further in the next chapter). Not only did it assert the centrality of Christendom to the ethno-national narrative, but the very act of investing the main square with a religious building funded by the public budget appeared to many activists and citizens as a severe blow to civic space and again violated Constitutional provisions on state secularity. After having been delayed for two years, the construction of the church eventually began – although not on the central square, as initially planned. As these examples show, each new cultural representation put forward by Skopje 2014 (military, religious, ethnic) has the effect of narrowing down and reinforcing the imagined community that is implied by such an image, from which all the others are automatically excluded.

Tsar Samuil, Justinian I, Alexander the Great, Goce Delčev and Dame Gruev (*figure 26*), Saints Cyril and Methodius (which I will discuss further in the next chapter): all these figures concentrated on the central square epitomise two of the three main components which lie at the centre of Skopje 2014's *conceived space*: the Religion and the Army/State power. Not far from these monuments, a Marriott hotel is under construction, adding the third element of this powerful triad: capitalism. Together, these three pillars constitute the boundaries of the Macedonian imagined community.

## **Conclusion**

This short overview of the Skopje 2014 project attests of the power of architecture and planning in constructing, legitimising and protecting identity. In a period marked by political, social and economic uncertainties, the central authorities use timeless symbolic references and resort to the inertia of the built environment in order to constitute, seduce and reassure the ethnic Macedonian audience. We can refer here to 'ontological security', defined by Giddens (1991:40; cf. Dovey, 1999:48) as a sense of order and continuity experienced by an individual or a group. The ancient roots of the new Macedonian mythology, supported by seemingly eternal materials such as bronze

and marble, in song and in militarised representations, are meant to inspire a feeling of stability and security among an ethnic Macedonian population whose identity is presented as 'threatened' since the independence of the country.

Opposing the constant fluidity and drift of society, architecture, sculpture and song help to fix identities over time. Appealing to deeply rooted feelings, such as patriotic attachment and religious faith, or echoing a narrative familiar to young generations, is a more subtle strategy than simply imposing one's authority. This echoes Foucault's conception of the power of space as 'inviting' or 'stimulating' certain actions rather than pre-determining them. Power relies more on 'capture and seduction' (Foucault, 1976:62) than on a coercive violent set of mechanisms ensuring the subservience of the individuals. However, this attempt, which I will analyse in further in Chapter 7, does not make Skopje 2014 legitimate. The project engages in historical revisionism, the hijacking of collective memory and a nostalgic reconstruction of an idealised historiography. Nevertheless, Skopje is not a unique case in the world and other states have deliberately rewritten national histories to boost national self-esteem, and used monumentalism and neo-classical architecture to root their authority and legitimacy in space (Dovey, 1999). The originality of Skopje is that this process is accompanied by symbolic ethnic cleansing, on which I will now concentrate.

## – CHAPTER 6 –

# THE CONTESTED CITY

Skopje is a place being torn by the politics of territoriality of ethno-national leaders who aim to purify the city and who see minorities as potential threat to ‘their’ ‘pure’ spaces. In this chapter, I analyse how architecture and planning play a fundamental role in the symbolic ethnic cleansing of the city. Drawing on Foucault, I examine in section one Skopje 2014 as a project that seeks to build material and moral barriers between groups. In section two, I use Lefebvre’s view of space as a site of contestation to explore the reactions such policies trigger and how they might be opposed by counter-initiatives in urban space and, in particular, by the Albanian project of Skanderbeg Square. In section three, I question these reactions and show that, instead of a situation of resistance, we have a situation of negotiation, accommodation and complicity between ethno-national leaders. The dividing city seems to be shaped less by logics of group conflict than by sectarian politics which promote divisive conceptions of urban identity. This constitutes an important dimension within urban conflicts which has been less developed by Foucault and Lefebvre. My discussion therefore extends the analysis of the previous chapter in several ways, offering a more complex picture of urban politics. While these processes are not unique, Skopje is an interesting case-study in this regard because urban change is strongly driven by elites. This analysis provides valuable information on the relationship between top-down management and the lived space of urban inhabitants in dividing cities. Conceptually, it points towards a need for more work on collusion in urbanism space power.

## 1 Urban space and ethnic cleansing

Here I will outline and exemplify my analysis before considering certain aspects of the process of cleansing in more detail. I will examine Skopje 2014 first as a project which seeks to construct a ‘pure’ space delimited by material walls. Second, it aims to remove

any spaces of liminality, from which ‘pollution’ could emerge. Third, it follows territorial strategies or appropriation and extension of the city centre, and draws new geographies of power and exclusion in the city.

In this section, I draw on a psychodynamic perspective on Foucault’s (2004) perspective on security and town planning to analyse Skopje 2014 as an enterprise of ethnic cleansing, carried first through a process of spatial bounding and the creation of barriers in the city. The project is characterised by its concentration on a very small space, with only the central area around the main square being concerned (*figure 27*). Moreover, its boundaries are well delimited, with its northern edge stopping just where the Municipality of Centre ends and where the Municipality of Čair and the old Ottoman town begin.

Medieval cities employed special zoning practices to manage epidemics and seclude the sick in a particular place of the city in order to contain the risk of contagion. But whereas, in medieval times, such measures might have been legitimate because of the lack of knowledge of how diseases were spread, physical walls have taken on another meaning today. The fear of ‘infection’ is no more physical, but moral, as are the quarantine measures taken in order to resist the spreading of ‘deviance’ and ‘a-normality’. It is a means by which ‘pollution’ is avoided. The lexical field of disease is present in discourses of difference and exclusion: when the ‘blood’ is not ‘pure’, there is a risk of ‘disease’ and ‘contamination’. This threat of ‘contagion’ or ‘infection’ should be pushed away and permanent ‘quarantine’ made compulsory. In his analysis of gating processes in Los Angeles, Davis (1990) argues that social mixing is perceived both as a threat of contamination and a challenge to hegemonic values. Atkinson (1998) noted that removing the city’s ‘pathologies’ and ‘cleaning’ space was a means to ‘purify’ society in Fascist Roma. Spatial boundaries thus reveal moral boundaries. Maintaining the purity of the self presumes a binary categorisation of what is pure and what is defiled, which finds a spatial reality by the construction of walls. Drawing on Douglas’ (1966) writings on purity and danger, Sibley notes that separating is part of the process of a group’s purification. His analysis of the capitalist city of the 19<sup>th</sup> century discusses the existence of urban schemes to reshape cities in order to ‘purify’ them by excluding ‘polluting’ groups. Certain peoples and places were labelled as deviant and threatening, following a moral and geographical determinism: the physical degradation of those areas echoed the moral degradation of their inhabitants. Hence the need to bound space and relegate those areas and individuals outside the boundaries of ‘pure’ space’.

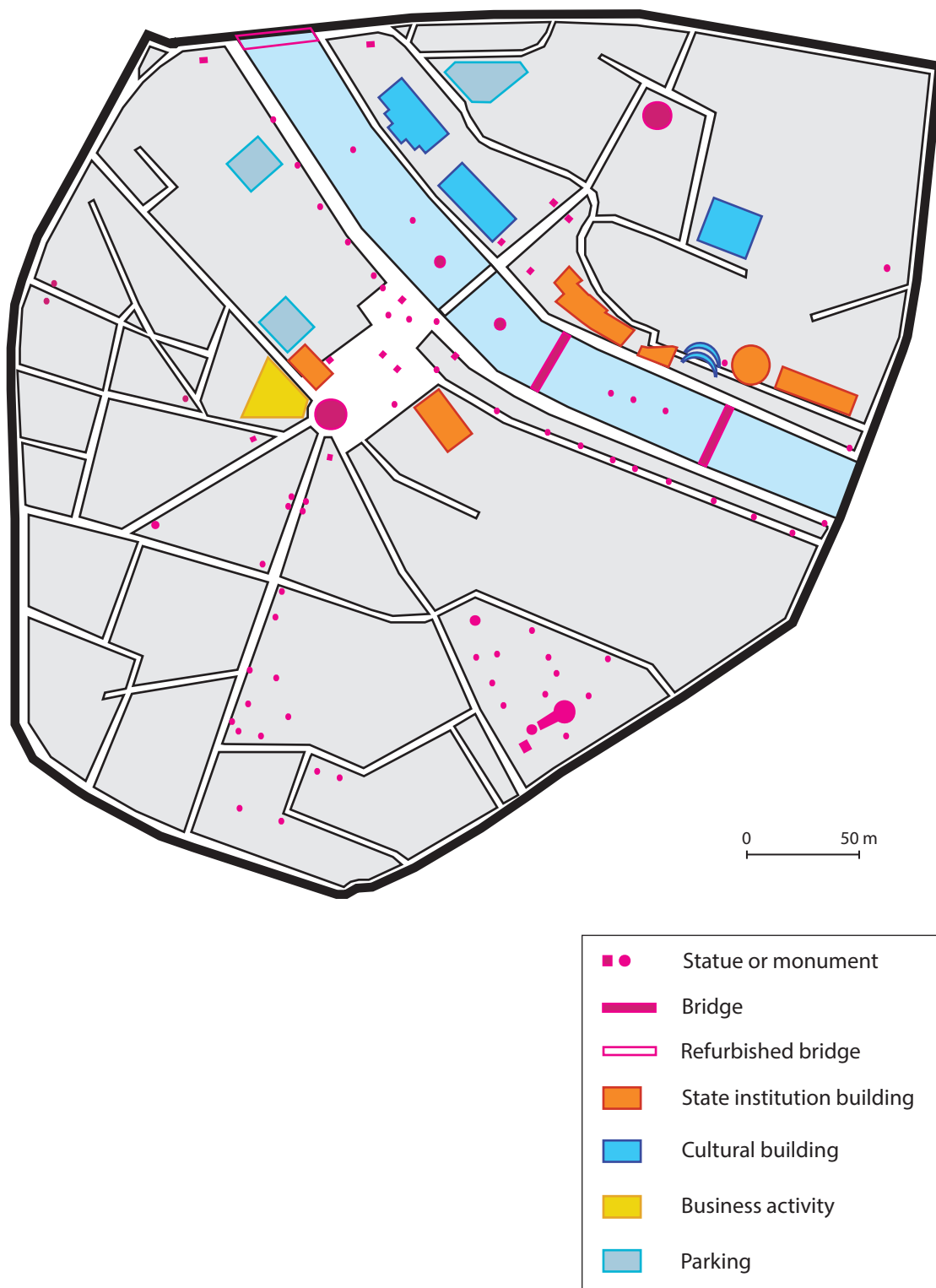


Figure 27: Map of the Skopje 2014 project

These ideas on purity and danger are highly relevant, I argue, to understanding the Skopje 2014 project and the ethno-nationalist restructuring of the city more broadly. Not only does the project intentionally ‘forget’ a large part of its population – namely, its ethnic minorities and, in particular, Muslim communities – it also aims at hiding everything and everyone who might have a connection with them. By constructing high buildings on both sides of the river and literally saturating the central space with built forms, Skopje hides the old town from view. Whereas, before, a visitor could see the Čaršija from the central square, this has become impossible because of the lines of statues (Alexander the Great, Justinian I, the *Gemidzii*, Goce Delčev and Dame Gruev, Saints Cyril and Methodius, the fountain on Philip of Macedon) and monumental buildings (the National Theatre, the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, the complex of the Museum of Archaeology) located on the riverside (*figure 23*). Skopje 2014 erects a screen of statues, monuments and buildings in lieu of the Ottoman and Muslim city and diverts attention from the communities it hosts.

If the Macedonian project is concentrated in the city centre and the riversides, it is not only because of the centrality of the place. It is also because of its status as a border zone. The fear of pollution never seems higher than in places of intersection. Here Sibley’s discussion of liminality and its contrast with ideas of home is particularly relevant. Liminal places range from borders and disputed territories to no man’s lands and crossroads: they are places where people pass through but never live in. A home, on the other hand, is a permanent residence close to the heart of the owner. It is something which an individual possesses and which conveys a feeling of security. It is contrary to a liminal place, which is both an ambiguous zone and a source of anxiety, marked by a lack of clarity of what belongs to whom. In Sibley’s psychoanalytic framework, this uncertainty calls for a need for definition and regulation.

Skopje’s city centre may be considered just such a liminal zone. The riverbanks are an ambiguous place, ‘in-between’ and almost a no man’s land. In the eyes of the central authorities, the ‘Macedonian city’ ends on the right side and the ‘labyrinthine’ Ottoman city begins on the other side – the ‘anti-Macedonian’ space. The Stone Bridge is therefore a breach through which contagion could reach the Macedonian city. People may cross the bridge and bring contagion with them. This unstable zone is characterised by its social and ethnic heterogeneity. In Lefebvrian terms, this zone is a *representational space* which the dominant power seeks to replace by *representations of space* in order to divide groups by prohibiting the potential for contact. It is a place

whose very existence threatens the manichean terms of the hegemonic Macedonian narrative. The Bridge is therefore not a sudden and absolute rupture but a threshold, which contains the potential for interaction. This, in turn, threatens the dominant representation of the River Vardar as a barrier dividing two entities. Drawing further on this analysis, I argue that Macedonian national elites, in seeking to define the contours of 'normality', are driven to physically isolate the threat of contagion and eliminate difference from this key space. For the centre, the potential for interaction with the 'Other' challenges its hegemonic values and stereotypes, and should be removed. Territorial markers are required to signify who is Macedonian and who is not, by emphasising what is home and what is not, where 'urbanity' begins and where it ends.

This role is played by the two statues of the Christian Saints, Cyril and Methodius, which are located on the left side of the river, in front of the Stone Bridge. The statues have a religious and cultural connotation, since the two Christian missionaries are considered to be the fathers of the Glagolitic alphabet and responsible for the Slavic cultural development. Their presence in Skopje 2014 is a celebration of Orthodox iconography and the Cyrillic alphabet, which is held to be unique to Macedonians in the country, since Albanians are mostly Muslim and use the Latin alphabet. Their location at the foot of the bridge marks the entry of visitors the entry into 'Macedonian land' for visitors from the North, or the exit from the familiar, Western, 'pure' homeland and the entrance into the unknown, the Oriental, the dangerous. The saints stand on a massive pedestal at about two meters from the ground (*figure 26a*). Their heads are slightly bent, as if watching the walker. The omnipresence of religious symbols on their dress, and the fact that one of them holds a book which faces the visitor, are powerful symbols: it is as if they were showing the Slavic writings and saying *'To enter, you must speak the language'*. Cyril and Methodius are the guardians of the gate, the guardians of the breach and of Macedonian values.

In the nationalist narrative, the state has hitherto lacked its 'own' site of centrality. With Skopje 2014, it now has such a site. The project follows a strategy of appropriation and extension of the city centre which alters the moral geography of the city. The city centre is no more meant to include the Stara Čaršija, the historic core of Skopje, but is comprised of Macedonia Square. The capital city does not unify the two banks of the river, but is located on the southern side only. Skopje is not – and has never been – a multicultural city, but forevermore an ethnic Macedonian one. The recent fountain of Philip of Macedon, built close to the Saints, is located exactly where the



Municipality of Centre ends and where the first paving stones mark the entrance into the Čaršija. With its back turned to the old town and its imposing size, it literally hides this entry and symbolically marks a closure of space from those who come from the right side.

Further east (and still just at the northern edge of the Municipality of Centre) on the river bank, a new Courthouse will stand – so close to the canal that hardly a few meters separate it from water. Since there is no bridge across the Vardar at this place, it would be logical to expect the main entrance of the building to be located facing the old town. Instead, arguing that there was a lack of space, the project has included the construction of a new bridge, surrounded with neo-classical statues, for a monumental entrance. As a result, while being located on the left side of the river, the Courthouse is made to be entered – and admired – from the right side. Entering from the left side would allow pollution to enter the breach. By giving a new direction and reading to place, Skopje 2014 appropriates both its function and meaning. Indeed, the same analysis could be made of other recent constructions on the northern bank. They are more or less all meant to be visualised from the south – that is to say, from an ethnic Macedonian point of view. This geography of power and exclusion shows that Skopje 2014 is not only an enterprise of monumentalisation, but also a performance and stage play. Conceived by politicians who had already set the design and outlook of the buildings, leaving no space for professionals to propose additions, the project is a show, choreographed in a masterly fashion. Skopje 2014 aims at recentering Skopje, cutting it off, protecting and hiding it from the North, and, based on the direction of the statue of Alexander the Great, declaring symbolic war on the Ottoman city.

In the nationalist imaginary, everything that does not belong to this definition should either be assimilated or marginalised, expelled or erased. This is the lot of minority groups who do not integrate the imagined ethnic Macedonian community. In order to remove ambiguity, the first project of Skopje 2014 did not include any Albanian figures. A former adviser to the Prime Minister openly stated that the latter was neither anti-Greek nor anti-Bulgarian, but anti-Albanian: ‘Antiquisation has a double goal, which is to marginalise the Albanians and create an identity that will not allow Albanians to become Macedonians’<sup>1</sup>. Any component of the project which could have an Albanian connotation is appropriated and made Macedonian. This is the lot of

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<sup>1</sup> Balkan Insight, ‘Ghost of the past endanger Macedonia’s future’, Boris Georgievski, October 27, 2009, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/ghosts-of-the-past-endanger-macedonia-s-future> [accessed: 12/03/2013]

the 30-metre-high statue of Mother Teresa, recently planned for the main square. Because of her Christianity and the ambiguity of her origins, Macedonians consider her to be Macedonian, even if Albanians regard her as Albanian and see in this project a hijacking of history.

The issue at stake here is one of public space. Public space is never neutral: it is always a place where a certain community or *public* is imagined, organised and constructed. Since a well-defined public is easier to dominate than uncontrolled diversity, urban entrepreneurs – especially when driven to implement an ethno-nationalist imaginary – seek to level and filter social heterogeneity. This is the case with Skopje 2014, which attempts to mould the city's public space as a landscape. The new city centre is close to becoming the kind of 'dead public space' referred to by Sennett (1992), or the 'pseudo-public space' described by Mitchell (2003). It is at high risk of becoming a unified and homogenised space, where interactions are regulated and controlled, and the 'public' is carefully defined and selected. Skopje 2014 appears to have been designed to establish one identity in the city and to refuse its multicultural character (referred to as 'bastard' by Mijalkovic and Urbanek, 2011). This attempt therefore is part of the processes that bring a city to division. The wish to become an entity leads to the internal dissolution of the city, something which may ironically be symbolised by the surprising patchwork of monuments, figures and eras of the project. But while the 'grand national capital' (Janev and Kriznik, 2010<sup>2</sup>) offers a space where each inhabitant is meant to embrace the imagined community imposed by its ruling elite, it cannot totally control who will accept this membership or reject it.

## 2 Skanderbeg's counter-attack

Contrary to most Marxist thinkers, Foucault was more concerned by the way power is exerted and contested than by its oppressive aspects, centering his analysis on the individual as an active subject rather than an object of power. In *Histoire de la Sexualité* (1976: 125), he writes that 'where there is power, there is resistance': power is indeed co-extensive with resistance, 'there is no power without potential refusal or revolt' (2000a: 324). To him, power relations are not reduced to oppressor-victim relations, but they are productive relations, with positive effects on the individual's self-making. In

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<sup>2</sup> 'From Open City Towards Grand National Capital: Mapping the Symbolic Reconstruction of Skopje' <http://www.scribd.com/doc/14056508/Mapping-the-symbolic-reconstruction-of-Skopje> [accessed: 01/06/2011]

the series *Security, Territory, Population*, delivered at the Collège de France in 1978, Foucault discusses the notion of ‘counter-conduct’, described as a resistance to processes of governmentality, yet not in the form of a complete rejection of government. It is rather ‘the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price’ (2007: 75), in other words a ‘struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others’ (ibid: 201). Counter-conducts are intimately linked to the practices of power they oppose, at the same time as they shape them. In the same vein, *representations of space* are never totally successful in establishing hegemony (Lefebvre, 1974): in the city, dominant representations are defied and opposed by counter-narratives. Space is a site and medium of contestation and, here also, counter-conduct. For Lefebvre, the city acts both as platform and effect of power relations, which tend towards a dialectics of centre and periphery, through which social groups are excluded from centrality and pushed into the periphery<sup>3</sup>.

In the case of recent urban politics in Skopje, the centre is embedded by the ethnic Macedonian state which seeks to assert its own representation of space and identity over urban society, by expelling to the periphery and erasing marginal elements that do not fit with its vision and might resist its enterprise. The main group excluded from Skopje 2014 and consigned to marginal and peripheral roles and spaces is the Albanian community. I will show first that, in the light of recent events in Skopje, it is legitimate to analyse Albanian projects as acts of resistance. These may be seen as a response from an excluded minority which challenges the dominant ideology of the state by proposing counter-spaces and counter-narratives to urban identity in the capital city. However, as I will then argue, power relationships are more complex than this. The centre may not be as homogeneous as it pretends to be and we may have to depart from ethno-national narratives to better understand the mechanisms at work in the dividing city. While the concept of divided city leads researchers to assume the homogeneity and stability of group and identities, based on ethnic or religious criteria, I question hegemony within and across these divisions and highlight the role of elite decisions in constructing and exploiting the image of division.

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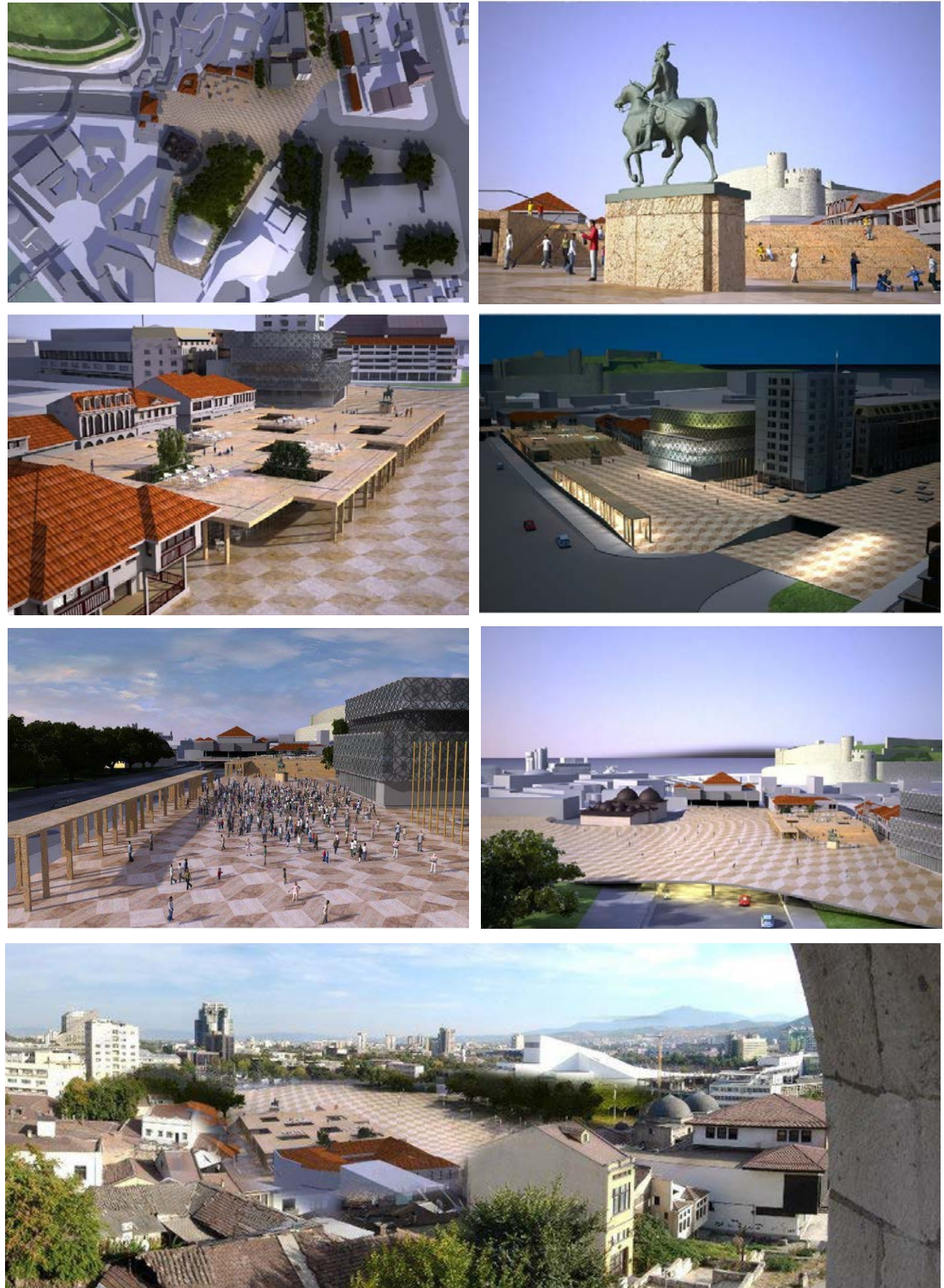
<sup>3</sup> This dialectics should not be determined in geographic terms, but rather seen as in the ‘dialectics of centrality and marginality’ of Sassen (1996). Centrality means here access to urban services and possibilities, and peripheralisation implies demarcation and exclusion from urban life.

## 2.1 Skanderbeg vs. Alexander the Great

In 2006, a statue of Skanderbeg was constructed on the Albanian-led Municipality of Čair's main square, close to the Čaršija. Skanderbeg was a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Albanian nobleman who actively opposed the Ottoman expansion. He is considered by Albanians to be a key figure of the Albanian national awakening and their most important national hero. Four years later, an architectural competition was organised and, in September 2010, the complete renewal of this area was announced. The new square – named after the national champion and twice as big as Macedonia Square – was immediately labelled by both sides as the 'Albanian square' and the project has been described as a 'response' to Skopje 2014. I will first analyse it as a counter-narrative to Skopje 2014 before exploring further the urban political geographies of these projects.

Only a few months had passed since the start of the Skopje 2014 project when the mayor of Čair, Izet Medziti, announced the results of the architectural competition and the resulting project for Skanderbeg Square. Located at the edge of the old town, near the Vardar, the square is almost the mirror image of the Macedonia Square with respect to the river and parallels between the two spaces are easy to draw.

Plans for the square presented to the media by Čair officials in September 2010 created quite a stir in Skopje. According to the project, the new square, which will encompass 28,000 square metres (*figure 28*) will include a fountain, an underground car park (parking in the square has hitherto been uncontrolled) and an amphitheatre which will also stand as a memorial to Skanderbeg. The architectural firm selected to conduct the project actually proposed two different versions of the square: a small one, located only in Čair and containing only a few shops and the amphitheatre and a second, bigger version, extending into the neighbouring municipality, Centre, from the Old Bazaar to the Macedonian Philharmonic building and the Macedonian Opera – a project which needs, of course, the approval of the Macedonian municipality, which is likely to be problematic. The media reaction was to some extent evident in a series of newspaper headlines: *'Skopje's Albanians plan 'alternative' City Square'*, *'Skanderbeg Square will be bigger than Macedonia Square'*, *"Skanderbeg Square is not a revenge over "Skopje 2014"*, *'Artists and Politics: a dangerous liaison'...* While the new square was seen by most media as an Albanian counter-attack in a symbolic war between the two main ethnic groups, these headlines suggest different readings of the project. For some, it was an 'alternative' to the place made central by Skopje 2014, as if Skopje now had two



Source: eggra 2011

Figure 28: the Skanderberg Square Project



centres. Others saw it as revenge in a game of out-bidding between the two communities, as if the Albanians were claiming: '*You have your centre, but we also have ours now, and it's bigger!*'. The last suggests a concern with the risk of instrumentalisation of architecture by politicians.

Regardless, a dualistic narrative is evident in the narratives surrounding the two projects. On the one hand, there is a square built around the centre of gravity of the ethnic Macedonian narrative – Alexander the Great – and on the other is the Albanian equivalent, George Kastrioti Skanderbeg – *the* national hero. On one side, a single-identity, exclusive work – on the other, a similar initiative. The respective direction and gestures of the two main statues on both squares may also be analysed as revelatory of this symbolic struggle. Alexander and Skanderbeg are oriented as if they are looking at each other – as if they were fighting. Both are on horseback and, while Alexander wields his sword against his enemy, Skanderbeg has almost a gesture of defence, with his right hand raised in front of him. The new 'Albanian' Square is meant to be twice as big as Macedonia Square and it was announced *after* Skopje 2014 – possibly as an 'answer' to the latter. For centuries, the Čaršija marked the centre of Ottoman Skopje. It is only since the interwar period that Macedonia Square has been considered by the regime to be the real centre of the city. Skopje 2014 reinforces this displacement of the centre from the left to the right side and endorses this appropriation of the notion of 'centre'. The dualism of Skopje 2014 and Skanderbeg is that of a struggle for the city centre between two groups, between two different conceptions of the city and the nation.

Media, politicians, and ordinary citizens have highlighted this set of mirrors. The square was not presented by as a mere architectural project proposed by a local government, but was immediately analysed as an 'Albanian act of resistance', by local and international media. A few days after the project was announced, the *Southeast European Times*' headline read, '*Does Skopje need a "Skenderbeg Square?"*' with a telling lead paragraph: 'The Macedonian government is spending millions to renovate a square in Skopje. Now the mayor of an ethnic Albanian majority municipality wants to construct a competing square across the river. Are things getting out of hand?' <sup>4</sup> *Balkan Insight* wrote: 'Ethnic Albanians living in the Macedonian capital are planning to build a second city square, widely seen as their rival to the government's "Skopje 2014"

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<sup>4</sup> Southeast European Times, 'Does Skopje need a "Skenderbeg Square?"', 08/10/10, [http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/setimes/blogreview/2010/10/08/blog-03](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/blogreview/2010/10/08/blog-03) [accessed: 12/10/2010].

revamp scheme<sup>5</sup>.

The ‘Albanian’ project has been criticised extensively by ethnic Macedonians, as much for its supposedly vengeful character as for its ethno-national ethos. Many Macedonians continue to protest vehemently against what they see as an ethnic Albanian enterprise aimed at destabilizing power-sharing political arrangements and the internal equilibrium of society by threatening the established monoethnic narrative. Even Albanians seemed divided over the issue<sup>6</sup>. Some intellectuals overtly questioned the need for and cost of such a project in one of the poorest municipalities of Skopje. The sociologist Albert Musliu wrote that ‘monumental works can be a positive thing in normal circumstances but not in a time of economic crisis’<sup>7</sup>. While some enthusiastically chose to support a project seen as linking the modern and the traditional, others criticised the use of urban planning for ‘political ends’<sup>8</sup> – something I will consider further in the next section. For now, I will continue to focus on this analysis of Skanderbeg Square as an act of resistance to Skopje 2014.

This perspective suggests the following reading of the project: by constructing this place within Skopje, the municipality of Čair directly challenges the fixity of urban identity and the stability of social order. ‘Given that *they* had their square, why could not we have *ours*?’ is a commonly heard answer among the community. As shown by Findley (1995), while segregation places undesirable people out of sight, contact and mind, the ethnic Albanian community is attempting to resist their invisibilisation normative frame, by saying out loud and engraving onto urban space ‘*I am visible*’. Lefebvre would add: *I have the right to the city*. Given that the fight against hegemonic space depends upon the need to *produce* space, the Albanian square is a deliberate attempt at investing public space and retaking a place in the city. Against the Macedonian state’s new colonial space, Albanians oppose their counter-space. In Lefebvrian terms, Skanderbeg Square might be read as a place of resistance to the dominant space. The marginalised outgroup seeks to *take* place and through it to create its own narrative. With this recent project, Skopje appears to be encountering a struggle that is not only symbolic but vital for the material existence of the excluded community.

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<sup>5</sup> Balkan Insight, ‘Skopje’s Albanians Plan ‘Alternative’ City Square’, 27/09/2010, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/skopje-s-albanians-plan-alternative-square>, [accessed: 28/09/2010]

<sup>6</sup> Utrinski Vesnik, ‘What Albanians think of the Skanderbeg Square’ (*Што мислат Албанците за плоштадот „Скендербег“*), 02/10/2010, n°3397

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

This struggle took on an even more vivid dimension when, a few months later, another project set the two communities further in opposition.

## 2.2 Conflict over Kale church

In this section, I discuss how archaeology, town planning and religion are involved in the ethno-national reconstruction of Skopje. In particular, I analyse an episode in the struggle for power among urban groups, which could be seen as embodying Lefebvre's perspective on centre and periphery. However, as I will argue, such an interpretation may be questioned and another reading of power relations suggested.

Only a year after Skopje 2014 was announced, a new controversy nearly brought Macedonians and Albanians to blows. On February, 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Macedonians and Albanians fought on Kale, the old Skopje fortress, and the police did not manage to separate two groups. This incident, which ended in several policemen and civilians injured, was the culmination of a chain of events which started just two weeks before, when national media revealed that the government had started the construction of a religious building inside Kale. A mysterious church-like steel skeleton had appeared on the fortress side and it soon became public knowledge that a 13<sup>th</sup> century church had been excavated. The Office for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, a state-related institution, planned to restore it in the form of a church-museum. Given that the fortress is part of the Čair municipality, the project stirred suspicions among Albanians who denounced an attempt of the Christian Macedonian majority to gain a foothold in what they regard as 'their' side of town.<sup>9</sup> Yet, for the Macedonians, Kale is a major symbol, since it was the historical centre of the Serbian city, before the Ottomans invaded Skopje. For Albanians, the project was seen as a new attempt by Macedonians to appropriate their territory by expending theirs, whereas for the latter, it was a legitimate reappropriation of a territory they consider as historically theirs.

Soon, the Albanian community, with the main Albanian party, the Democratic Union for integration (*Demokratska unija za integracija* or DUI), at the forefront, declared that the archaeological complex also comprised an older Illyrian structure and that, given its claimed Illyrian ancestry, it should have all the decision-making power on

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<sup>9</sup> Balkan Insight, 'Museum-church raises hackles in Macedonian capital', 02/02/2011, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-ethnic-relations-put-to-the-test> [accessed: 03/02/2011]



the site.<sup>10</sup> The Islamic religious community, via its main leaders, also demanded the parallel construction of a mosque inside the fortress. Despite being a partner in the VMRO-DPMNE-led government, the DUI openly opposed a project it considered offending for Albanians. Moreover, it suspected that the museum would sooner or later be given to the Macedonian Orthodox community, which would convert it into a house of worship. Facing political pressure and the threat of obstruction from the main Albanian party and governmental partner, the Macedonian authorities declared the end of the project. The case would have been closed, had a second episode not occurred. On February, 10<sup>th</sup>, late at night, a crowd of a hundred Albanians marched onto the site to find about fifty Macedonian workers working on the church-to-be. The latter refused to say who employed them but admitted they had been instructed to start the construction from 10 PM and to work overnight only. The Albanian group, which included several DUI officials such as Izet Medziti and the Deputy Minister of Interior, Xhevat Buchi – a presence which received wide coverage in Macedonian media<sup>11</sup> – raided the foundations of the steel structure and destroyed parts of the scaffolding. The police was present but did not intervene.

Over the course of the next two days, spirits became inflamed. On the one hand, VMRO-DPMNE-led institutions denounced what they saw as an act of vandalism carried out on a cultural monument. On Macedonian social networks, the event was condemned and people called for a rally on the site in order to protect the project. A Facebook group exhorted Macedonians to join ‘the final battle to eradicate the *Shiptars*’<sup>12</sup>, adding: ‘my Macedonian brothers, on Saturday we will have our revenge’. Kale is seen by Macedonians as a territory they have to defend against Albanian invasion: it is almost as if the Serbian Christian city has to be protected again against the Ottoman Muslim invader. On the other hand, Islamic leaders accused the government of promoting Christianity as a state religion and Albanians denounced what they saw as a provocation from the ruling party. The Facebook profile of one activist read that ‘the only good *caurin*<sup>13</sup> is a dead one’.<sup>14</sup> This was a direct response to the Macedonian exhortation toward battle: an invitation to defend Kale as an Albanian

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<sup>10</sup> The Economist, ‘How many building booms can one city take?’, 01/03/2011, [http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/03/macedonias\\_ethnic\\_disharmony](http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/03/macedonias_ethnic_disharmony) [accessed: 25/04/2011]

<sup>11</sup> Macedonian International News Agency, ‘100 DUI activists try to bring down church at Kale fortress’, 11/02/2011, <http://macedoniaonline.eu/content/view/17554/2/> [accessed 15/06/2011]

<sup>12</sup> The word ‘Shiptar’ is a derogatory term for an ethnic Albanian.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Caurin’ is a derogatory term for an ethnic Macedonian.

<sup>14</sup> Literally, it said: ‘Only a massacred Macedonian is a good *caurin*’.

territory against Macedonian intrusion. In both the Macedonian and Albanian statements, the Other is referred to in derogatory terms which depersonalise and dehumanise. The use of general terms, 'a Macedonian' or 'the Shiptars', identifies those who initiated and opposed the project, i.e. the Macedonian government and the DUI, with their respective community as a whole. Politics are extended to populations and what should be imputed only to a minority of people becomes the lot of the majority.

On February 13<sup>th</sup>, two groups of young men – Macedonians on one side, Albanians on the other – eventually clashed around the fortress. Several DUI ministers and members were caught on camera during the incident. Some of them later claimed that they had come to the fortress not to take part in the incident, but rather to calm the population. Both the Albanian and Macedonian oppositions condemned the violence and called on the government to put an end to it, attributing to it responsibility for these interethnic tensions. NGOs such as *Civil* asked the ruling party to put a stop to controversial projects and work towards building a consensus. The government did eventually intervene to stop the escalation of violence, averting the ethnic crisis expected by many experts. In a joint statement, the two ruling coalition partners condemned the incident and urged calm: 'Sensitive issues should be solved only with open political dialogue through institutions. We assure you that the nurturing of the cultural rights and heritage of all ethnic communities remains a priority for both parties'.<sup>15</sup> As a sign of appeasement, the government officially abandoned the project and eventually gave the site to the Orthodox Church, which did not reveal its intentions for it.

This episode could be analysed as part of a territorial conflict. Following Lefebvre, the centre, embodied by the Macedonian state was challenged in its attempt to colonise space by the Albanian community. In the logic of territorial conflict, the latter, marginalised outgroup, has no other choice but to *take* space in order to resist the hegemonic power. However, it is possible to cast doubt on such an interpretation. Among other things, rumours circulated afterwards accusing the Macedonian and Albanian ruling parties of having orchestrated the incident. I propose in the following section to shed a different light on the power relations at work in Skopje by questioning in particular the supposed homogeneity of the groups allegedly involved in such conflicts. This leads me to argue that the divided city is shaped less by logics of group

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<sup>15</sup> Balkan Insight, 'Eight injured in clashes over 'church' construction in Macedonia', 14/02/2011, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albanians-macedonians-clash-over-museum-church>, [accessed 18/02/2011]

conflict than by sectarian politics which promote divisive conceptions of urban identity. Rather than a situation of resistance to power, we are in the presence of a situation of negotiation and collusion – a dimension which has been less studied by Foucault and Lefebvre, but which nonetheless represent an important dimension within urban conflicts.

### 3 Sectarian policies and competition for urban space

Before labelling Skanderbeg Square as an ‘Albanian’ act of resistance to ‘Macedonian’ urban policies, we should be attentive to certain details that accompanied the project. In this section, I draw on a closer reading of events surrounding Skopje 2014 and Skanderbeg Square, supplemented with testimony from interviews conducted during my fieldworks.

When the Skanderbeg project was announced, it was publicly criticised by some members of the government, and it was clear at that time that it would be funded by the Municipality of Čair only. Yet, contrary to what might have been expected, the main funder will not be the Municipality but the Macedonian central government. This totally changes the status of the project and how it should be analysed. It is likely that Skanderbeg Square was subject to political negotiation in high places. In January 2012, just before construction started, the project was even included in Skopje 2014.<sup>16</sup> As explained by Z., a Macedonian artist:

The Albanian party is trying to negotiate what they can get from this grand nationalist narrative of Skopje 2014, so they’re saying: *‘Ok, you’re having your Macedonian mythic grand figures... we’re having ours’* and because I don’t think the VMRO wants to allow too many Albanians on the main square, they’re giving them their own space.<sup>17</sup>

This testimony indicates the possibility of a compromise established between the two main parties in power. Indeed, the initial inclusion of Skanderbeg Square in Skopje 2014 could be read as an aspect of the consociational model of government applied in Macedonia. Including Skanderbeg Square in Skopje 2014 would lend the project an

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<sup>16</sup> Dnevnik, *‘The Skanderbeg Square’s first stone in place’* (‘Поставен камен-темелник на плоштадот Скендер-бег во Скопје’), 17/01/2012, <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=95A31B3469C5F944B1B1494BF41F31AE>, [accessed 31/02/2012)

<sup>17</sup> Interview, June 2011

interethnic dimension, potentially averting blame for its monoethnic character. According to S., a Macedonian of Turkish and Serbian origins:

The project of Skanderbeg Square was made for keeping the mouths of people living on the other side of the bridge shut, even if many Albanians are against the project. It is more or less the same as Skopje 2014. We are giving them the Skanderbeg project, so that now we have Skopje 2014 on this side of the bridge.<sup>18</sup>

This person shared the idea of a compromise, but one made in order to silence dissent or opposition. Both projects indicate an ethno-nationalist perspective and each mirrors the other. Rather than being an act of resistance, the presence of an Albanian square legitimises Skopje 2014, as did a recent compromise<sup>19</sup> between the VMRO-DPMNE and the DUI, in which it was decided that Albanian personalities would be included in Skopje 2014. Three Albanian statues (of Nexhat Agolli, Josif Bagëri and Pjetër Bogdani) are therefore planned among the hundreds of Macedonian monuments – a concession which allows the central authorities to deny accusations of ethno-nationalism.

However, this eventual turnaround does not mean that the ethnic Macedonian leadership has decided to go back on its own enterprise, yield power and give a voice to a counter-narrative. The fact that Skanderbeg Square has not been much publicised by the Albanian leadership, despite its eminently political character, should have raised suspicions. Instead of openly playing the ethnic card, the DUI adopted a low profile and preferred to emphasise the technical aspects of the project<sup>20</sup>, while the VMRO-DPMNE government kept silent. The architects have highlighted the inclusive aspect of the square, as opposed to the exclusive character of the ethnic Macedonian narrative, but they refused to compare the two projects:

It has been commonly said that our project was a response to Skopje 2014. Yet, there is no ground for comparison! While Skopje 2014 is an enterprise of division, Skanderbeg Square is open and unifying.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Interview, October 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Nova Makedonija, 'Successful political deals for Skopje 2014' (*'Успешно политичко пазарење за „Скопје“ 2014'*), 22/05:2010, n°21989 ; Utrinski Vesnik, 'Three Albanian monuments on Macedonia Square' (*'Три албански споменици на „Македонија“'*), 05/09/2010, n°3399.

<sup>20</sup> Nova Makedonija, 'The 'Skanderbeg Square' is not a revenge to 'Skopje 2014'' (*'Плоштадот „Скендер -бег“ не е реванш за „Скопје 2014“'*), 05/10/2010, n° 22100.

<sup>21</sup> Interview, October 2010.

Accused of producing a mirror image of Skopje 2014, bearing the same negative effects they denounce, the architects tried to justify themselves. Post hoc, they claimed new rationales for their projects and claimed that their initial aspirations were misunderstood and diverted. My own impression when I met these very young architects is that they were somehow manipulated. Given the very few projects in the country which are not stamped as ‘Macedonian’ and the scarcity of Albanian architects, they jumped at the chance to be part of a huge urban project, without having first assessed its political dimensions and potential consequences.

Similar discretion from the central authorities may be observed in the Kale incidents. Following the clashes, Prime Minister Gruevski avoided dramatic comment and rather took refuge in official calls for the preservation of good interethnic relations. After having staged a protest against construction, the DUI leader, Ali Ahmeti, joined Gruevski’s call for restraint when it appeared that the event was likely to degenerate into a more serious conflict. This may explain why both the Macedonian and Albanian opposition – the SDSM and New Democracy – denounced what they saw as the government’s responsibility for the issue by claiming that the incident was staged by the latter as an attempt to distract the population from more serious issues.

Both events are good case studies of the role of political leadership in conflict, especially interethnic ones. Churches have already been built in Albanian-majority municipalities, and local governments have launched reconstruction projects before. Yet, never before had such actions been received like this. Since 1991 and, in particular, 2001, any action undertaken at a local or national level is likely to take on a political dimension and resonate in the interethnic conflict that is dividing the country. Any decision concerning the public realm is now part a game of power between the coalition partners, whose conflicts are rapidly carried into the street. While urban space is not always the primary cause for intergroup conflict, it becomes a platform for the expression of conflicting sovereignty claims and tensions between groups, as well as a battleground between communities – each proclaiming the city as its own (Bollens, 1998). This is also what Weizman (2007: 4-5) was observing in the case of Israeli practices of dominion over the occupied Palestinian territory, referring to these territories as a ‘battlefield on which various agents of state power and independent actors confront each other’ and where ‘the mundane elements of planning and architecture have become tactical tools and the means of dispossession’. This is precisely what is happening in Skopje, with sectarian politics invading public space.

Instead of analysing things as part of a Macedonian/Albanian struggle, therefore, another reading is possible. Understanding the organisation of space and society in a city labelled as divided means not falling into the traps of such spaces. In Skopje, this means complementing the dominant ethno-national paradigm that is embedded by the ethnic Macedonian/Albanian narrative. Power relationships are more complex than they first seem to be, and competing blocs are not as homogeneous and separated as they make themselves appear. The centre is not to be identified only with the homogeneous ethnic Macedonian majority, but is itself heterogeneous. Similarly, the Albanian community cannot be understood solely as a powerless and marginalised minority. Two logics are actually intertwined with each other – power/resistance and negotiation/accommodation. Foucault's and Lefebvre's perspectives are useful to understand dividing cities, but only when complementary dynamics of adjustment and complicity are also factored in.

Since 2001, institutional power-sharing is the rule in Macedonia. The ethnic Albanian community is now meant to be represented at all levels of the state and, in practical terms, it means that the central government is made up of a coalition between the ethnic Macedonian political party in power and representatives of the Albanian minority – currently, the DUI. The Ohrid Framework Agreement made Macedonia *de facto* a bi-ethnic state, where, in respect of the legislation, all political and social issues are ethnicised. It also happens to support a hierarchy in ethnic belonging, since the other communities that make up the republic are not equally represented in decision-making. At the city scale, this has led to the complete domination of ethno-national narratives within the Macedonian/Albanian paradigm, which identifies space in Skopje in terms of essentialist and exclusive territories. Smaller and less powerful minorities, such as the Roma, are often the forgotten people of this game of power. While the government invests large amounts of money in Skopje 2014, the Roma suffer widespread poverty and lack of access to basic necessities as health care and electricity. Roma children begging or collecting bins present a painful contrast with the grandiose reconstruction of the city centre and the amount of money allocated by the governing party during election campaigns to redesign the city centre in its colours (*figure 29*).

Skanderbeg Square is a symbol of the games of power that oppose, not the Macedonian and Albanian populations, but rather their political representatives. Politicians extend their battlefield from the political to the public sphere, and from the social psyche to the city, which becomes an arena through which political conflicts are





Realisation: O. Véron January 2013

photos: O. Véron

Figure 29: Sectarian politics and under-represented minorities

played out. As argued by a local political analyst:

The division is not only between ethnic communities, but between political parties. This project [*Skanderbeg Square*] is supported only by DUI politicians, it's a propaganda project [...] Many nationalist Albanian NGOs claim an Illyrian past. So, on the one hand, we have ancient Macedonians, and, on the other, ancient Illyrians... This is dangerous and irrational. We don't need that: it triggers tension and intolerance. The identification with ancient narratives is imposed by the elites: they serve you this stuff on a plate as if nothing else existed.<sup>22</sup>

This underlines the view that the Skanderbeg project is not only a spatial mirror image of Skopje 2014, but also a form of antiquisation: on both sides are ethno-nationalist projects that resort to the past to consolidate their power.

In the case of the Kale church, DUI leaders raised tensions by showing a bullish attitude and it was only at the very last moment that Ahmeti eventually called for restraint. This appears to have been a conscious manipulation of the situation. But Albanians who took part in the 13<sup>th</sup> February clash have been radicalised by political leaders who pushed them into reacting to an 'ethnic provocation' from the Macedonian majority – whether it be through open or implicit calls for action. Given that Macedonia was at this time right in the middle of the political campaign for the June elections, we can assume that both the VMRO and the DUI were competing for electorates and that the period was ripe for the hunt of undecided voters. Since many Albanians resent what they perceive as a lack of consideration from the central authorities for the development of city's northern areas and feel forced to live in derelict places, the urban question is a very sensitive issue that is always raised at election time, as seen in the testimony of K., a highly educated Albanian in his late 40s who works in Karpoš (South):

I lived in Čair for my whole childhood. At first, there were only two Albanian families in my buildings: all the others were Macedonian. Today, all of them are Albanian. We also moved from this place. It used to be a nice area, with prices similar to other municipalities such as Centre. Then, people mostly left because of the 2001 events. Macedonians didn't feel secure anymore: it was almost a civil war! Yet, it's not the unique reason... The reason why my family left is because of the deterioration of living standards. There wasn't much investment in the infrastructure... there were holes in the street, but we got

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<sup>22</sup> Interview, October 2010



used to it! People started to construct terraces out of the buildings, it didn't look good... Now, you can see it for yourself, there is a big difference between this area and the centre. Before, there used to be a lot of trees, it was a green area, but people started to have private gardens, they erected fences, but very primitive ones, made of sticks, in order preserve their part of the gardens, so that it all became very different and it looked really bad. It was a process of privatisation of public space. And, you know, most of them were rural-urban migrants, with very different tastes and habits. Aesthetically and symbolically, it is as if you build a barrier in the public space – a space which should basically serve the public need.<sup>23</sup>

We should not see 'the centre' as a homogenous ethnic Macedonian entity, but rather a set of political entrepreneurs representing various ethnic groups and interests, who fight to impose their own representation of the city as an ethno-nationally divided one, and from which any cross-community narratives are excluded. By appropriating what they consider their 'own' space, they do not leave any room for discourses other than of sectarian identities. Both the Macedonia and Skanderbeg Squares are dividing places. Allowing the Albanian community to have its 'own' space was not simply an act of ethno-national resistance; it was rather a means for the ruling party to buy the silence of its coalition partner. For the latter, it was also a means to show other Albanian parties its strength and rally voters unsatisfied with Macedonian urban policies and sensitive to the Albanian ethno-nationalist cause. But while it arises from tactical political motivations, it simultaneously reinforces differentiation and separation between the two communities. As developed by an NGO activist:

The same things happen in the Macedonian and Albanian communities. It is the same discourse. If I come now to Čair, after the bridge at the beginning of the Čaršija, and start to shout in a megaphone: *'I am not going to let the ethnic Macedonians do this! Revenge!..'*, everybody is going to applaud me, I will found a party and be popular. Anyhow, the Albanians are happy if they are part of the coalition, even if the Macedonians are running the show. Because, like this, they have some power, they may be corrupted and enrich themselves. This is the main power of this government: it produces divisions. It relies on the production of division. The more the population gets divided, the more

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<sup>23</sup> Interview, October 2010

frightened it is, and the more power these people get. It's all just 'divide and rule', you know.'<sup>24</sup>

Following Lefebvre's assertion that '*the most important thing is to multiply the readings of the city*' (1996:159), I suggest that practices of subversion in the dividing city lie in those visions which seek to transcend ethno-national narratives by challenging essentialist spatial representations and practices that sustain divisive conceptions of urban identity. Sectarian politics, as they are reflected in architecture and urban planning, only result in reinforcing segregation and dispossessing the inhabitants from 'their' city. Skopje 2014 is not the only project that is to blame for the walls being erected throughout the city – the Skanderbeg Square project similarly traces boundaries in space. But by labelling the old town as an 'Albanian' territory and erasing other possible narratives, it equally supports the ethno-sectarian logic. Together, both projects construct '*spaces of hate*' (Flint, 2004; cf. Nagle 2009b: 327), polarised and antithetic spaces. Such differentiated spaces produce the image of a mosaic of closed worlds, each with their own cultural matrix and their own mode of operating. This is an image of a divided city over which a dark shadow hangs; the shadow of ghettoisation.

## Conclusion

As shown in this chapter, approaching recent urban politics in Skopje is not an easy task given the omnipresence of the divided city lens and the ethno-nationalist logic. Political elites play a major role in the construction of representations that actively shape space and society, often in an insidious manner. In the case of Skopje, it is easy to be lured by a first analysis of a struggle opposing the ethnic Macedonian central state to other ethnic minorities and marginalised groups, with the Albanian community at their head. Yet, this centre/periphery or dominant/subversive space framework, while suggesting certain useful insights, needs to be qualified. The reality is not as simple as a Macedonian majority which excludes minority populations in order to affirm its hegemony over the city, using architecture and planning as the central elements of its strategy of power. Similarly, it is not as simple as 'the Albanians' – as if the community was a homogeneous entity speaking and acting with one voice – as *the* marginalised outgroup whose very right to the city is trampled by the state, as international media are prone to show. Hence the need to refine our understanding of divided cities so as not to endorse

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<sup>24</sup> Interview, June 2011.

powerful but misleading representations. Rather than dismissing it, I will attempt to develop the centre/periphery framework differently.

This chapter has advanced my argument that the divided city concept may have limitations when applied to urban spaces. Using a static concept to refer to a dynamic reality contains a risk of perceiving from the beginning urban space as divided, and analysing the city in terms of power relations between a dominant majority and a marginal minority. It may also lead to see groups and identities as homogeneous and stable, and to adopt the ethnic criterion as the first and most important element of analysis. Finally, as the example of the Kale fortress shows, it may also imply the acceptance of the normative image forged by ethno-national leaders, an image that is quickly taken up by local and international media. As I have shown, considering the heterogeneity of groups and departing from the prism imposed by sectarian politics is important in understanding the dynamics through which cities may become divided.

In ontological terms, I argue that there is no such thing as a divided city. The divided city is a static and normative concept which should not be applied to urban spaces because this application contributes to creating the reality it purports to describe. It is difficult, once a label is appended, to see things differently from what the label says. Divisions may be intensified or undermined during particular episodes, but analytical practices should do nothing either to ratify or to intensify existing divisions or dividing processes. This is why I emphasise the use of new concepts and a new vocabulary to analyse ‘divided cities’, which I will develop in the next chapter.

## – CHAPTER 7 –

### THE LIVED CITY

It is a mid-Summer day in Skopje.<sup>1</sup> The sky is blue and the sun is high, most people are on holiday. Some have deserted the capital city for the more quiet countryside; others enjoy their free time and have a drink with some friends in the city centre. Despite the noise of the construction sites, many Skopjani converge towards the main square, full of people chatting in open-air cafés, shopping in the old socialist mall or the brand-new stores which have opened nearby, or simply walking around the square, between statues of Macedonian heroes. In the middle of the square, the ‘Warrior on a Horse’ seems to attract much attention: passers-by are stopped by the music and admire the choreography of the fountain, couples pose for a picture, children splash water on each other, while tourists carefully listen to their guide talk about on Antique Macedonia. The small park where Roma families used to rest in the shadow of high trees has been closed by construction fences delimiting the space where a new hotel is being built. There are fewer Roma children and beggars on the square than just a few years ago. A small number of Albanian mothers and daughters rapidly cross the square, carrying shopping bags full of clothes bought in one of the old mall’s most famous shops, which specialises in selling out of fashion Western brands at budget prices. There are hardly any Albanian men in the square’s trendy cafés: they usually prefer to play chess or drink Turkish coffee in the Čaršija. A small minority of Macedonians who used to meet on the Square has also deserted the centre, which has become too ‘Disneyfied’ to their taste. They favour instead quieter places in Debar Maalo or the Čaršija’s ‘alternative’ cafés. It is hot and workers are working from sunrise to sunset on construction sites. This is a typical summer day in Skopje.

The aim of this chapter is to contrast the city as it is *conceived* or *imagined* by its elites with the city as it is *lived* by its inhabitants. I explore the various urban spaces and practices within Skopje and consider their relationship to the idea of the divided city,

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<sup>1</sup> This vignette is a composite of observations from several occasions during my last fieldwork in Macedonia.

focusing in particular on examples where transgression and resistance to imposed representations might be in evidence. As I argued in the previous chapters, politics play an important role in moulding collective representations and practices. Yet, urban inhabitants have the power to transgress hegemonic narratives. Transgression may be the result of intentional and concerted events, but it may also be an unexpected outcome of ephemeral individual actions. Together, these acts of resistance and transgression create spaces of subversion. I analyse here the power of such behaviours or, in Lefebvre's words, of such *moments*, in destabilising the image of the divided city and the lived reality of urban divisions. Spaces of subversion may not be where we expected them to be, but their very existence stands as an alternative to the space and society imposed by hegemonic powers.

In section one, I will examine the city centre through a survey conducted there, which explored the practices and perceptions of urban residents and the ways in which this area is indicative of a dividing city. I will in particular discuss the place of recent urban politics in shaping representations among inhabitants, by comparing past and present behaviours and analysing generational differences. In section two, I will consider places and practices that may counter dividing tendencies, focusing particularly on the Čaršija and the Bit Pazar – Skopje's biggest flea market – and on specific acts of transgression such as political graffiti. In section three, I will examine how dominant representations of space are challenged by acts of open contestation led by non-governmental and informal groups who oppose the sectarian logic of division by creating their counter-spaces in Skopje.

I first draw upon De Certeau's micro-scale approach to examine the 'tactics' deployed by individuals to cope with strategies of power. I explore how individual practices may contest, subvert or disrupt fixed scenarios, by *using* them in ways that differ from those initially planned within the framework of the social order that seeks to dominate Skopje. Second, I draw further on Lefebvre. Departing from the schema of Macedonian/Albanian struggle that is part of the narrative of Skopje as a divided city, I analyse how sectarian policies may be questioned by alternative readings in urban space. I aim to show how *conceived space* may indeed be challenged by marginal groups in their attempts at resisting hegemonic powers and creating their own *lived space*. Although seemingly insignificant, these acts of resistance and transgression are nonetheless powerful enactments of the right to the city and of the inhabitants' struggle against the divided city. Finally, by exploring resistance as an *aesthetic* process, I draw

on Debord's conception of 'situations' and 'psychogeography' to define an artistic, active and participatory approach to urban space. I examine how, by investing urban space and integrating the public, engaged art may help build alternatives to hegemonic representations of space.

## 1 A dividing centre?

The wordless histories of walking, dress, housing, or cooking shape neighbourhoods on behalf of absences; they trace out memories that no longer have a place – childhoods, genealogical traditions, timeless events. Such is the “work” of urban narratives as well. They insinuate different spaces into cafés, offices, and buildings. To the visible city they add those “invisible cities” about which Calvino wrote. With the vocabulary of objects and well-known words, they create another dimension, in turn fantastical and delinquent, fearful and legitimating. For this reason, they render the city “believable”, affect it with unknown depth to be inventoried, and open it up to journey. They are the keys to the city; they give access to what it is: mythical.

(De Certeau and Giard, 1980:142)

Before examining in more detail the tactics developed by urban inhabitants to cope with normative geographies of power in everyday life, I consider the daily practices, habits and perceptions of Skopje's residents in the city centre. The notion of *border* is essential to this analysis. As seen in Chapter 1, a border refers to a multidimensional reality, which as well as excluding walls includes interfaces which connect more than they separate. In Skopje, such threshold zones may be direct or indirect: Macedonians, Albanians and members of other communities come across each other in platforms of interaction, such as the city centre and ethnically mixed neighbourhoods, or in hospitals, markets and malls. However, people may frequent the same place without interfering with each other. Therefore, the presence of members of different ethnic groups in these areas does not necessarily make them a place of intermixing. Yet, these borders may also be home to new and different modes of connection. Because their physical proximity induces inhabitants to engage with their Others or, at least, prevents people from totally ignoring members of different communities, these interfaces are porous and unstable places which challenge the planned scenarios of the divided city. My analysis

focuses here on Skopje's most symbolic buffer-zone – the city centre – which contains the city's most profound divisions, but also its greatest potential for overcoming urban partition.

In this section, I first discuss extensively the findings of my survey. I examine the city centre as a symbolic border and analyse its place in the practices and perceptions of urban residents. My survey found an important correlation between these practices and the inhabitants' perception of 'safety', which I discuss in the light of the current ethno-national political discourse. The survey also made important findings concerning generational differences, which suggest that recent policies have greatly shaped changes of perceptions. Second, I analyse more closely the relation between politics and the residents' perceptions, by focusing on the way current urban polities (in particular, the projects Skopje 2014 and Skanderbeg Square) affect behaviours and the way the city is perceived. I analyse the evolution of representations, which turned Skopje, from a city having one centre, to a city of two different centres, suggesting that ethno-national policies seem to have been successful in dividing the city and its inhabitants.

For many people in Skopje, the Vardar epitomises the divided city, in particular in the area where its presence is the most noticed, the city centre. Because it separates the 'Albanian' Čaršija from Macedonia Square, it is seen in the collective psyche of Skopjani as a natural and symbolic border between 'us' and 'them'. I examined the role and place of this central zone in the life of Skopje's inhabitants via a survey I carried out in June-July 2011 (cf. Chapter 1). My aim was to assess how the narrative of the divided city figures in the way ordinary inhabitants behave and talk about their daily practices and perceptions.

In many respects, the city centre seems to be divided into two culturally exclusive areas. For most Macedonians, the Čaršija is an Albanian place where they are not welcomed. Women wearing headscarves, minarets and mosques are usually the first elements mentioned when asking Macedonians about the Čaršija, although these elements do not constitute the norm in the old town. Specific visual elements are selected and generalised to the whole area (*figure 30*).

A symbol of the pathway between these two worlds is the Stone Bridge, which connects the two banks at the same time as it underlines the physical move needed to go



Realisation: O. Véron January 2013

photos: O. Véron

Figure 30: The Stara Čaršija stereotyped as an Albanian Muslim place.



from one side to the other. Going from one place to the other, crossing the bridge, implies a choice. For most people, it means entering a completely different world. During my first fieldwork in 2008, I asked one of my interviewees, a young Macedonian woman, to show me the Čaršija. She was first reluctant at the idea of crossing the bridge and brought me to the ‘other side’ with a deep feeling of uneasiness. A few streets in the old city were enough for her to feel disoriented. She felt it would not be safe to venture further into the area, that we would get lost and that ‘something might happen’. She preferred to turn back. This shows how the Vardar acts as a *sheltering wall* which protects the area from potential outsiders. In some respects, the bridge is a checkpoint which filters movements between the two sides. Those who dare to cross the bridge are no longer under the protection of their community and turning back is the only way to be secure again.

The separation of the city centre into two exclusive sides is reflected in the results of the survey<sup>2</sup>. 64 percent of respondents stated that they go to Macedonia Square more often than the Čaršija, and only 16 percent the opposite, while 15 percent stated that they visit each equally. An ethnic gap is pronounced, with 71 percent of Macedonians visiting Macedonia Square more often (against only 6 percent of Albanians) and 10 the Čaršija (compared with 59 percent of Albanians). Generational differences are also telling. Among the 64 percent of respondents going more often to the Čaršija, 47 percent are between 18 and 25 years-old. This generation gap confirms a tendency which appeared in my interviews: young Skopjani are more mistrustful towards the Čaršija than older generations. People born before the 1990s and who grew up during socialism find the separation between the two areas less marked than young people. This relation to the Čaršija shows the progress made by the narrative of the divided city in the 1990s and, in particular, the 2000s. The youngest generations, born after Macedonia’s independence and who were still children or pre-teenagers when the Ohrid Agreement was signed, seem the most likely to nurture strong prejudices towards the Čaršija and its inhabitants.

Similarly, only 3 percent of Macedonians stated that they frequent the Čaršija on a daily basis, and 19 percent once or twice per week, against, respectively, 24 percent and 41 percent of Albanians. 43 percent of Macedonians declared that they never go to the Čaršija, or only once or twice per year. Asked about their places of leisure, half of

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<sup>2</sup> A translated version of the survey is available in Annex 3.

the Macedonian respondents indicated that they never go to a café located in the Čaršija, or only once or twice per year, whereas 59 percent Albanians go there at least once or twice a week. This indicates that crossing the river to go to the old town happens more often when people *have* to do it rather than when it results from of a voluntary choice. Macedonians would rather choose Macedonia Square over the Čaršija for their free time. Here again, the generation gap is important, since only 1 percent of the Macedonians aged 18-35 stated that they go to the Čaršija every day. Also, among the half of Macedonians who never go to a café in the Čaršija or do so only once or twice per year, 53 percent were between 15 and 35, compared with only 32 percent between the ages of 35 and 45. Whereas only 17 percent of Macedonians aged 18-35 go the Čaršija at least once or twice a week, 36 percent of those aged 35 to 45 have the same practice.

In the light of these results, I asked Macedonians to explain their answer. Those who do not go to the Čaršija on a regular basis often evoked *'the people who go there'*, in other words, *'Albanians'*. Some openly spoke their mind: *'Because of the Shiptars. I can't bear them!'*. Those who said that they never, or only rarely, went to the Čaršija are often also those whose answer was the most prejudiced against members of the other community. On the other hand, some Albanians praised the *'great atmosphere'* of the Čaršija, a place which *'kept its soul'* and did not *'artificially change'*, while others referred to the moral values attached to it: *'there are less naked girls, there are more honest people and it's safer.'* We find the same notion of *shelter* in the way Albanians respondents perceive the Čaršija as in the way Macedonian respondents perceived Macedonia Square. These notions of change also reflect the idea that the old town has kept its identity and preserved that of its inhabitants. The river separating both sides can here be compared with the *prison wall* suggested by Markus (1986), in the sense of limits defining enclaves in the city and ensuring the preservation of the area and its inhabitants' identity through isolation and segregation.

Safety was often invoked to compare the two riversides. Only 4 percent of the Macedonians interviewed said that the Čaršija was safer than Macedonia Square, against 33 percent for whom it is the contrary. For 49 percent of respondents, the two places were equally safe. No Albanian respondents believed that the Čaršija was less safe than Macedonia Square, and 35 percent stated that it was safer, with only 35 percent thinking that both places were equally safe. Again here, those who frequented the Čaršija the least – Macedonian young people – usually perceived it as less safe than

Macedonia Square. For 50 percent of Macedonians aged 18-25, the Čaršija is less safe than Macedonia Square, whereas only 14 percent and 11 percent of Macedonians aged 35-45 and 45-65 respectively shared the same idea. Similarly, only 37 percent of Macedonians aged 18-25 stated that both places are equally safe, against 68 percent of 35-65 year olds. These results can be related to the escalation of tensions between the two communities in the 1990s, with a peak in 2001, a point to which I will return later.

However, among the Macedonians who assert that both places are equally safe, there are two further categories of people. A minority opposes Skopje 2014, stating that *'there is no reason to be afraid in the Čaršija. The new monuments on Macedonia Square are scarier'*. However, this alternative idea is not widespread. A majority supports the government's policies and it is to the state that they attribute the equal safety between the two places: *'the state controls and maintains the security in each part of the city, as every normal state does'*. Among the arguments of those who see the Čaršija as more dangerous than the Square, negative prejudices are often put forward: it is a *'place of ethnic tensions'* and *'ethnic intolerance'*, dangerous because of *'the people who live there'*, *'mixed'* and *'illiterate'*. Gender prejudices are also evoked, with respondents pointing towards *'the collective groupings of Albanian male population'* and a young woman stating: *'When I go there, they shout and whistle at me!'*. Such arguments are in line with the widespread idea that all Albanians are Muslims, organised in a patriarchal society, where only men appear in public space and where women must be veiled. There is no shame in openly referring to those who are responsible for this climate: the *'Albanians'*, depicted as *'aggressive'* and *'provoking the Macedonians'*. The physicality of the border is often highlighted: *'to reach the Čaršija, you must cross the bridge, and after [...] there is not enough light and it's not safe'*. The alleged distance of the place and the effort needed to get there may explain why people rely on collective perceptions and discourses rather than their own experience, since some respondents recognised they had *'never been there'* and relied on their *'impression'*. Others declare that they *'don't speak Albanian and [they] don't know who talks with [them]'*. Some simply state that *'everybody knows it's full of terrorists ready to kill you at any time'*, which suggests that physical presence is not required in order to form opinions.

As I will now discuss, the perceptions of Skopje's centre have evolved in the last decades. The perception of Skopje's centre as divided into two exclusive areas may not be new, but it has taken a new dimension in the 1990s and 2000s. The testimony of J., a forty-year old Macedonian, shows how collective representations have impacted on everyday life and induced changes in places of leisure and consumption:

With the increasing interethnic clashes and conflicts at the end of the 80s and in the 90s, along with the new political pluralism and the more active participation of Albanian citizens in the region, the same movement continued. Many Macedonians who used to live in places such as Topansko Pole, Butel or Yaya Pasha [*north side*] started leaving the place... Politics of division and segregation played a major role. Macedonians were scared because of what was happening in Bosnia or Kosovo: they feared the same would happen here! Albanians were seen as enemies! Inner migrations in the city were a means to prevent Skopje from becoming a new Sarajevo... And I remember the Čaršija: when I was young, I used to go there every night, all my favourite clubs were there, alternative groups and artists were very active... I loved the place! But 1995, 1996 and 1997 were key years... with the economic crisis came the ethnic clashes. Many people felt that an ethnic conflict was about to happen: the potential was there. And you had the feeling: 'Yes, Skopje will be divided, for real'. People were just scared that the Albanians were going to occupy the place, starting with business – and what next?... Macedonians stopped going to the Čaršija, there was nobody in the streets, it was scary...<sup>3</sup>

By imprinting the image of a threatening enemy, nationalistic policies have altered the daily life of Skopjani in the city centre. Transferred from the hands of the municipality of Centre to that of Čair in the 1990s, the Stara Čaršija, or 'Turkish' Čaršija, was officially given the status of an 'Albanian' territory. The degradation of ethnic relations at the end of the 1990s, in particular after 2001 marked a turning point in the way the area has been perceived by Skopje's residents, as seen in the words of V., a young Macedonian woman in her late 20s:

When I was a kid, I used to shop there quite often, with my mother and sister to buy shoes, jeans, bags... It was attractive and nice. But now, with those new malls [*on the south side*], I usually prefer to go there. I don't know which place is the most expensive, as I don't know why I am not shopping in the

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<sup>3</sup> Interview, September 2010

Stara Čaršija anymore, but that is how it is. I have always loved the Čaršija and I probably always will [...] but the thing is that, you know... *it's Albanian*. All the owners of the stores, the *kebabcenija*, etc., they are all Albanian. The population is Albanian as well: mostly males, and the only women usually wear scarves. Many Albanians shop there and they feel it's theirs. They pushed out the Macedonian population from there. Before, Macedonians would go more often. It all started with the ethnic crisis: before that, we didn't know about nationalities... who was who, and so on. It started with the Serbian war [...], everything escalated and there were more and more Albanians who finally stayed. When I was a kid, I was not concerned with who were the owners of the shops, that there were mosques there, or anything of the kind... I just felt good with my mother and my sister. I felt secure. It was a place for craftsmanship, where you could find nice things, and I will never stop going there on purpose. Yet, when it gets dark at night, if I am alone, I don't feel secure... because of all those Albanians walking in the Čaršija... something may happen... I know it's contradictory! I am saying at the same time that I love the place, but I feel afraid there!... It's not like Macedonia Square where I could walk alone after 2 in the morning... where only street dogs can scare you! The problem with the Albanians is that... you don't know their language: this makes the difference. It's a whole community. In general, I'm not prejudiced, not racist at all... but here, it's an ethnic community... When you're there and you don't speak the language... you know, whether I speak Macedonian or Albanian, they would treat me differently. Ok, maybe I'm improvising, I'm exaggerating, I'm just imagining... but in general, it's good to know the language, you feel closer to the nation... but I would not learn Albanian, there are other languages that I prefer to learn before!..<sup>4</sup>

This testimony shows the evolution of perceptions in the light of the 2001 events: from a place where the interviewee felt 'secure' and 'good', the Čaršija turned into an '*Albanian*' place, where 'you don't speak the language' and where 'something might happen'. It also suggests a dichotomy in these relations to the area: she 'loves' the Čaršija, but she 'feel[s] afraid there', which explains why she does not go there anymore. This complex, contradictory relation to the old town was often found in the survey's results. Examining the impact of recent political events on the behaviours and perceptions of Skopjani, I asked the respondents about their past and present habits. 26 percent of Macedonians declared that they used to go to the Čaršija more often in the

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<sup>4</sup> Interview, May 2011

past than now (with the notion of ‘past’ voluntarily left open to the respondents’ interpretation), 38 percent less often and 35 percent as often as now. Given the young age of most respondents (born after 1990), one can assume that most young people did not go there as children, that is to say at the end of the 1990s and in particular after 2001, because of the deterioration of interethnic relations and the identification of the Čaršija with ‘Albanian’ territory. This explains why these results are difficult to interpret and cannot be taken as representative of the practices of the whole Macedonian society.

Examining the elder generations’ practices is more pertinent. 50 percent of 35-45 year olds and 67 percent of Macedonians aged 45-65 stated that they used to go to the old town more often in the past. Their reasons support the idea of a closure of Macedonian businesses in the Čaršija due to the increasingly tense climate in the 1990s. Whereas the old town used to be Skopje’s nightlife centre, most of the Macedonian clubs and cafés have closed over the course of the past two decades: *‘the nightlife is the Čaršija was more “modern”, there were a lot of clubs which do not exist anymore now’*. They refer to *‘much bigger [...] constraints’* now than in the past, such as *‘political and ethnic changes’* which can explain why *‘Macedonians don’t go there anymore’*. Respondents often put forward the responsibility of the 2001 conflict in their changes of pattern. The conflict resulted in an increasing feeling of *‘insecurity’* among Macedonians, and the *‘language barrier’* was felt more strongly than in the past. These testimonies give the impression of a deterioration of intercommunity relations, with some respondents even declaring that there were *‘better interethnic relations in the past’*. This could be a politically correct way of saying that the old town is now perceived as an ‘Albanian place’, with some people openly saying that there are *‘more Albanians in the Čaršija’* now than in the past.

Given that the ruling party has been in government from 2006 onwards and seems more popular than ever, as shown by the VMRO-DPMNE last public meeting in front of the government’s headquarters before the election in June 2011, which drew large crowds (*figure 31*), it is unlikely that a majority of the population disapproves of recent urban policies – even if the last elections ended with the Centre’s mayor being replaced by his SDSM opponent. Part of the survey focused on respondents’ level of satisfaction with the area and current changes. The overall level of satisfaction with the



Figure 31: A VMRO-DPMNE political meeting in the city centre, June 2011

area is high, with 85 percent of the answers ranking from ‘satisfied’ to ‘very satisfied’. Unsurprisingly, the lowest level of satisfaction is among the Albanian and Turkish minorities, with 24 percent of Albanians and 30 percent Turks declaring themselves not satisfied, compared with only 12 percent of Macedonians. This confirms differences in perceptions of Macedonia Square between members of different communities. Whereas Macedonians seem to feel at home in this area, the same cannot be said of ethnic minorities.

The survey explored in particular the relations between these levels of satisfaction and the ongoing policies and changing landscape. When asked whether their level of satisfaction was related to the recent changes, 50 percent of all respondents acknowledged that they were related, against 36 percent for whom this was not the case. More precisely, 42 percent of respondents declared that the changes positively impacted on their choice to sit in the area, which shows a high level of support towards the government’s policies. Only 16 percent declared a negative influence and 32 percent no influence at all. These answers reveal the difference of perception among Skopje’s different communities, with only 35 percent of Albanians stating that the changes had brought positive effects and 41 percent declaring their influence to be negative (compared with only 14 percent Macedonians). An analysis by age is also an important indicator of the difference of perceptions among the various generations: whereas 47 percent of Macedonians aged 18 to 35 stated that the influence of recent changes was positive and 29.5 percent that it was negative, the proportion of ‘positive influence’ falls to 27 percent among Macedonians aged 35-45 – which means that the recent projects have a much more positive impact among the younger generations than among the elder.

When questioned about how the changes affected their choice of cafés, the majority of respondents favoured the state’s policies. The project’s aesthetics were often evoked, with reference to the *‘better look [of] the city centre’*. The anti-socialist narrative seems to have paid off, since many respondents criticised post-1963 Skopje, a city with *‘grey, very old communist’* architecture, lacking *‘nice buildings which could represent [the] country as the main city’*. The economic aspects, usually highlighted by the ruling party, were also often recalled. Some respondents believed that the project would *‘attract more tourists and stimulate the Macedonian building sector, which was in a deep economic crisis’*. The identity issue was often in the front line, with urban changes giving *‘a new spirit to the city’* and *‘re-establish[ing] its identity’*. Eventually,



a common conclusion was that *'Skopje will be like a European metropolis'* – the very words repeated on a loop by pro-government media from the beginning of the project.

However, most of those who claimed that this influence was negative (even if underrepresented in the total responses) were quite vehement in their protest. Some answered that *'Skopje can't breathe!'* and others that *'this part of the city, which used to be beautiful, is ruined and has lost its soul'*. They are relatively underrepresented in the survey because some are *'running away from the centre'*. Asked how they perceived the city centre's transformation, these respondents gave unambiguous answers, which often included the word *'catastrophe'*, especially among Albanians. Phrases such as *'urban nightmare'* or *'Chinese version of Las Vegas'* were used to describe Skopje 2014, which was often deplored for its *'cost'* and the imbalance between the investment made in this area and the lack of investment elsewhere, some respondents even declaring that *'nothing [was done] in the Čaršija!'* According to one respondent, *'everything should be the same. There shouldn't be any differences between the two riversides'*. Such responses indicate that urban authorities are not entirely successful in shaping people's interpretation of public space in Skopje.

While such answers indicate the popularity of on-going urban policies, the survey also explored the role of recent urban changes on the way inhabitants perceive the city centre and the city as a whole. The very notion of 'the city' as a referential framework has been called into question by theories of urban fragmentation. Should the city be considered a single entity and concept, or is it better understood in terms of sub-territories, each with its own identity? This issue is very much at stake in Skopje, in particular regarding its centre(s). For decades, Skopje's city centre has been considered as including both the old town (the historic centre) and Macedonia Square (the 20<sup>th</sup> century area), and as having the Stone Bridge as its centre. This representation has been altered in the last two decades as was revealed by survey. In the survey I asked whether Skopje was a city with two different centres – Macedonia Square and the Čaršija – or a unified whole.

For 36 percent Macedonians, Skopje had two different centres, 20 percent thought it has only one centre and 30 percent could not answer. 65 percent of Albanians favoured the idea of two separate centres, and only 18 percent of them believed Skopje had only one city centre. But here the statistics are not as important as the reasons

evoked to justify one or the other answers. Among those who believe that Skopje has two centres, there were also people who recognise the existence of urban divisions:

The city is always divided into two sides, or two different worlds, by the Old Bridge. It means that the Stara Čaršija and the centre have almost nothing in common, and, in the same way, sometimes, it seems to be a border between different ethnic communities.

Some deplored the existence of ethnic divisions, evoking *'a big divide between the two centres because of the stereotypes'*, and *'because [of] Skopje 2014 and Skanderbeg Square'*. Conversely, some were quite vehement against the Albanian minority, stating that *'those of the other national belonging create their own centre'* (a direct reference to recent events on Kale and Skanderbeg Square), which explained why people *'don't feel at home'*. Albanians, on the other hand, criticised the *'absurd city of tomorrow built by power'*, that is the Macedonia Square, comparing it with the Čaršija as *'something that has always been and will always be'*.

Among those believing that Skopje did not have two separate centres, some took a pro-Macedonian nationalist position, stating that Macedonia Square *'[had] always been'* the unique *'centre, without any doubt'*. One of the respondents declared: *'The Čaršija isn't the centre for me. It can't be, because I've never been there and I don't know how it is'*. Conversely, some respondents adopted a pro-Albanian nationalist position, with one declaring that *'Macedonia is Greater Illyria and the centre is the Čaršija'*. Moderate opinions recognised that *'each part [had] its own history and beauty'* and that *'harmony is the key for a perfect daily life'*; others averred that *'for the moment, there aren't two centres but the potential to become like this in the future exists'*; and some openly opposed the idea of urban divisions:

Skopje should connect the two parts of the shores by the river. It is crucial that people of all ethnic profiles be connected to each other. Separatism of the squares will separate nations and I do not want that to happen to my city.

Finally, when asked about the place where they felt better, most Macedonians made an equation between the *urbanity* of a place and the people who live there. Frequent answers included the impression that Macedonia Square was a *'more urban place'*, where people are *'more urban'*, *'civilised'* and *'similar'* to the respondents, and the environment *'cleaner'* and more *'diverse'*. This relates to the Orientalist representation of *'the Ottoman city'*, which equates the notion of *'urbanity'* with that of *'modernity'*,

taking ‘the Occidental city’ as a symbol. Inversely, a small number of respondents – Albanians and opponents of Skopje 2014 – put forward the ‘*authenticity*’ of the Čaršija, ‘*not yet ruined with absurd monuments and unwanted buildings*’. A smaller number declared that they enjoyed both places equally:

In both sides I feel good, because I am like this. But not all people feel like that. There are some people who, in general, don’t go to the centre, and others who don’t go to the Carsija because of the prejudices which separate and isolate them. What a pity!

Theoretically and drawing on Vidal Rojas’s analysis (2002) of urban discontinuity, it is possible to refer to a ‘discontinued continuity’ to conceptualise Skopje’s centre. Rather than a conglomerate of fragments – an association of differences – the city centre experiences a division which produces discontinuity and results into a tension between the unity and divisibility of urban space. Drawing on Markus’s typology of barriers, the renovation of the city centre is both a symbol and a result of the combination of two kinds of walls: *barricade walls* and *walls of aggression*. According to Markus, each community leader aims at protecting the cohesiveness and solidarity of his group by resorting to symbols and expressions of identity, and architectural creations are a means to express domination and power – something that appears particularly blatant with Skopje 2014 and Skanderbeg Square. My survey suggests that urban policies based on such mechanisms seem to be quite successful. As discussed in the previous chapter, Skopje 2014 is creating a wall of monuments and buildings to separate Macedonia Square from the Čaršija and hide the latter from view. The Skanderbeg project, I argued, traces symbolical boundaries in the city centre. Building walls, even if only metaphorical, has a profound impact on people who frequent the place. Initiated by their leaders and constructed on a daily basis by the practices and discourses of the inhabitants, Skopje’s new borders are dividing rather than connecting elements. Ethnic Macedonians and Albanians frequent the city centre, but interactions are limited. With the recent urban projects and with each community leader reinforcing the architectural identity of the group’s territory, the buffer-zone’s ‘thickness’ seems to be shrinking. It loses its interface function (bringing into contact different territorial systems) and result in a more linear understanding of urban division (when divisions are reduced to a wall).

Let me summarise the findings of my survey discussed in this section. My survey provided insights into the representations and practices of a sizeable portion of

the inhabitants frequenting the cafés around Macedonia Square in the daytime. One unexpected finding has to do with the impact of ethno-nationalist ideas in Macedonian society: whereas it is often said that nationalism affects uneducated populations more than the educated, the survey findings indicate that relatively educated people are also sensitive to ethno-nationalist feelings: 69 percent of respondents had at least completed high school and 15 percent had a Masters degree. However, overall the results confirmed certain hypotheses about the perceptions and practices of Skopjani concerning the spatialisation of the city and the effects of recent changes.

First, the survey supported my hypotheses on tendencies towards ethnic segregation, by showing that cafés located on the southern side are massively frequented by ethnic Macedonians, and not by Albanians. Ethnic minorities are particularly under-represented in this area, with only a small number of members of communities other than Macedonian, and a total absence of Roma as customers. Second, testimonies from interviews showed that intermixing has been decreasing from the 1990s onwards, and that it has been followed by a loss of confidence in a successful multiethnic future. Furthermore, a comparison between the past and present behaviours and an analysis of generational differences suggests that this feeling has been fostered by recent urban politics. Older people, having experienced socialism, do not have the same perspective as the younger generations. Ethno-nationalist feelings are more intense among young people, whose vision of the city as divided also reveals deeply-rooted prejudices and pessimism about prospects for multiethnic coexistence.

Feelings inimical to better intercommunity relations are widely shared among Skopjani, especially younger generations. Ethno-nationalist feelings and negative prejudice towards other communities provide a strong sense of separation at an individual level. Yet, while urban borders may be divisive, borders are also permeable. While Skopje's city centre seems to epitomise the fate of the divided city, it is also a place where this narrative is transgressed and contested on a daily basis, as I will show in the following section.

## **2 The transgressive city**

As seen in Chapter 1, *resistance* and *transgression* may be distinguished. While resistance is a refusal and implies intentionality, transgression is a crossing, an act

which unintentionally breaks a boundary. These terms are not exclusive and may overlap, but equally there is sometimes a tension between them. In Skopje, the actions of activists who *resist* the normative representations imposed by those in power are not openly supported by a majority of the population. However, a close observation of the daily practices of Skopjani indicates that there are many acts which could be considered ‘transgressive’ or ‘deviant’, if we mean here acts that do not respect hegemonic norms. Even seemingly trivial attitudes or actions may disrupt the play of normative behaviours upon which the image of the divided city is based. By emphasising how the normality of such narratives is fractured, it becomes possible to perceive alternatives more clearly.

While there are places and times in which the logic of simplification and separation are expressed and intensified, there are others where different paths are followed. In this section, I will explore the urban geography of Skopje and consider how counter-cultural spaces relate to ethnic and nationalist divisions, by showing the limits of the ethno-nationalisation of urban space. First, I will analyse the role of transgressive places, by considering the Stara Čaršija and its flea market, the Bit Pazar, as places where heterogeneity is introduced in homogeneous entities, and therefore challenging the ethno-nationalist narrative of division. Second, I will examine transgressive actions, by focusing on the new forms taken by political graffiti since the beginning of Skopje 2014. I will also provide two other cases of such transgression in the city centre.

## **2.1 Transgressive places**

While Skopje seems increasingly territorialised, I will consider here how its Čaršija relates to ethnic and nationalist divisions. The survey showed that the old town was surrounded by many prejudices, but it was still seen by an important number of respondents as a safe area. During my first fieldwork, in 2008, few ethnic Macedonians frequented the old town. Young people rather went to Macedonia Square and alternative outgroups gathered in Debar Maalo, a prominent place of counter-culture on the south side. The shadow of 2001 was still present in Macedonian consciousnesses and the Čaršija was surrounded by many exaggerated stories of murders and attacks. As shown in V.’s testimony, the area was commonly referred to as an exceptional and beautiful place, but also a dangerous, ‘Albanian’ area where they felt like foreigners and would not go, especially at night. Two years later, I was surprised to hear Macedonian friends

talking with excitement about the old town in ways that I could not have expected from their past attitude towards this area: ‘You’ll see, it has changed a lot!’. The Čaršija seems indeed to have undergone a recent ‘revitalisation’, which, from a dodgy and ‘alien’ place for most Macedonians, turned it into a counter-cultural place frequented by young people. In this section, I will examine the two realities of the Čaršija as a traditionally multicultural place and as a new place of counter-culture.

As seen in Chapter 3, the Ottoman Čaršija was a place of interaction where Muslims and non-Muslims conducted business together. In a city where communities lived in separate neighbourhoods, the Čaršija may not have been an *agora*, but it was a major meeting place where multicultural exchange occurred on a daily basis. Today, the blossoming malls have displaced the Čaršija as hubs of shopping and leisure, and the survey showed that the old town is no more considered the centre of Skopje. However, the Čaršija has preserved many of its multiethnic features. The area may be labelled ‘Albanian’ by a majority of Macedonians, but fieldwork there suggests that it is not a monoethnic place. I had the opportunity to be introduced to the Čaršija’s shopkeepers and craftsmen by an old Albanian respondent who ‘knew everybody there’ and whom I met through my survey. This led me to conduct research there, based on interviews and participant observation. It is true that many Albanian *kebabci* can be seen in the streets, but they adjoin Macedonian, Montenegrin, Turkish, Vlach and Bosnian shops, barbers and cafés. Social relations are characterised by horizontality, with sellers and craftsmen from various communities interacting there on a daily basis and having often developed friendly relationships. All day long, they chat, exchange news, share Turkish coffee or black tea with biscuits, go from one shop to the other and eventually close their stalls together in the evening.

While the concept usually refers to residential neighbourhoods, the *komšilik* – or tradition of ‘good neighbourhood’ – can apply to today’s Čaršija. Characterised by an attitude of mutual respect and reciprocal assistance towards one’s neighbours in the Balkans, regardless of their religion/ethnicity, the *komšilik* can be seen as a cultural feature preserved by those who work in the old town, despite the on-going sectarian logics of division in the whole city. This tradition is also visible in Skopje’s biggest market, the Bit Pazar (the ‘flea market’), located at the far north-east of the Čaršija (*figure 32*). While it marks the end of the Čaršija and the entrance to the Albanian-populated neighbourhoods of Čair, it is still a place frequented by members of all communities, and products in the Bit Pazar are advertised in Macedonian, Albanian,





photos: O. Véron

Figure 32: The Bit Pazar, a place of *otherness*

sometimes Serbian or Turkish. One of my interviewees, a young Macedonian woman, ostensibly expressed her dislike for this place. Although she pretended never to go there, she did if she had to, for instance when she was looking for something which she could not find elsewhere. To her, the place was dirty and noisy, full of uncivilised people with ‘peasant’ customs and Albanians immediately noticeable by their ‘ugliness’. I now argue that this place is in fact another setting where the divided city scenario is transgressed.

As in many Ottoman Čaršiji, the *bezisten* (covered market) has always been a functional place where inhabitants or all ethnicities would meet and conduct business, whatever the state of their relations in the city or the country might be. Today, Skopje’s main market does not appear to have lost its tradition of cultural mixing. The following statement of a fruit and vegetable seller at the Bit Pazar shows how he understands the market as a multicultural place:

What do you want? Two hundred grams of strawberries? A kilo you mean?  
If you want less, go to Ramstore<sup>5</sup>, we don’t do it here. [...] Here, in the Bit Pazar, it’s a lively place, it’s always full of people. We have different customers every day, look at my neighbours: I’m Albanian, he’s from Montenegro and she’s Macedonian. We talk about the weather, sports, politics... who cares?

The Bit Pazar is a place where people come together for economic reasons, but research there suggests that they socialise out of their traditional community by engaging in discussions about a variety of topics – including recent urban politics. Drawing on Foucault, Mattioli (2013:2-13) suggests that the Stara Čaršija is ‘a space of urban cosmopolitanism’ at the same time as a ‘heterotopian space’, where ‘the disciplining gaze and regulation of the state [have] never [been] totalizing’. He argues that the old town was only liminally included in the socialist system of governance and recalls that illegal trade flourished there at the end of the 1990s – which is still the case today. To him, the place has never stopped to be ‘alive’ and multiethnic in the end of the 1990s and the 2000s: it was only the Macedonians ‘who had stopped going there’. I do not share Mattioli’s entire analysis, in particular when he writes that the old bazaar has been ‘built’ as a heterotopian space and a zone of ‘planned disorder’ fitting the socialist plans of ‘inclusive exclusion’ of Ottoman heritage in the modern city, which I find contradictory and not reflecting accurately the reality of socialist planning. I also

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<sup>5</sup> A famous mall with a huge supermarket in Skopje.



disagree with him when, following an idea dear to Mike Davis and referring to the recent revitalisation of the Čaršija (which I will analyse later in this section), he argues that the heterotopian nature of the place was eventually overcome through 'gentrification' and 'finance capital'. However, I find his idea of the Čaršija as a heterotopian space – a space of *otherness* – interesting and close to my own analysis of the old bazaar as a place where ethno-national logics of urban division are challenged on a daily basis.

Because of its particular history, the Čaršija is a place which kept its tradition of cultural mixing, in particular among sellers and craftsmen. It is an area of the city which, like any other neighbourhoods, bears the identity of the community of its inhabitants: yet, this identity is not monoethnic, but plural and relational. It epitomises particularly the city as a place for life community rather than a place of fragmentation. This does not entail a communitarian view, but a conception of the city as made up of interconnected places and relations. Durkheim argued that life in community is the only way to bring individuals together. I therefore suggest that places like the Čaršija and the Bit Pazar are a source of hope against the narrative of the divided city. The daily interaction which they entail enables the constitution of a bond between the individual and the community – here the multicultural community of the old town and the market. Communication at the Čaršija is plural, with sellers exchanging in various Balkan languages, Macedonians engaging with Albanian shopkeepers and music from all over the Balkans being heard, with a backdrop of Christian churches' bells and muezzins' calls to prayer. In this place, common perceptions and norms of the divided city seem to be reversed. As one of my respondents, a Macedonian in his late twenties, told me:

You must not forget also the 'positive' prejudices here. For example, you may hear a Macedonian back from the market moaning about having been cheated by a merchant, and adding: *'It's because he was Macedonian; had he been Albanian, he would just have given me the exact amount for the exact price, there's no way you can be screwed by Albanians.'*<sup>6</sup>

As a form of carnival, the market is a *ritual* situation (Agier, 2002), characterised by the temporary unity between the individual, space and society. In such situations, the daily life is left behind through a codified and symbolic event. A new ordering of roles is consensually permitted within a larger collective frame and strategy. Yet, the Čaršija and the Bit Pazar are not exactly a *ritual* situation in the sense of an ephemeral event

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<sup>6</sup> Interview, June 2011.

occurring only once a year. In the old days, the market was set up just one day a week, but it is now open every day of the year, holidays included, as are the countless shops of the old town. For many inhabitants, in particular those who work there, it is an ordinary situation, characterised by regularity, necessity and localised interaction. It refers to a delimited space that the individual may experience on a daily or weekly basis and in which, in de Certeau's words, she has developed habits to escape constraints of the divided city. Like the workshop or the office, it is a *familiar* place, a 'close place' with which inhabitants immediately and spontaneously identify, and which they may psychologically and affectively invest. It is through such place that hegemonic representations of urban division are challenged and the narrative of cosmopolitanism preserved.

Once a deserted place at night, the Čaršija recently underwent a revitalisation process which made it gain back its lively nightlife. In just a couple of years, in late 2009 and beginning of 2010, it became a counter-cultural place frequented by young Macedonians, which now inspires ethnically positive narratives. A small part of the old bazaar, in particular, is usually taken as an example of a multi-cultural zone where people of various communities successfully interact – helping to construct the other narrative of 'cosmopolitan Skopje'. The Čaršija's revitalisation process was not supported by public policies: the change came from independent cafés and clubs which opened in the Čaršija. Whereas the area used to be renowned for its jewellerys and *kebabci*, as well as its traditional craftsmanship, the opening of 'typical Macedonian' places (for example, a *pivarnica*<sup>7</sup>) or 'modern' ones (i.e. nightclubs) reconnected the area with its tradition as a place of leisure and consumption frequented by Albanians and Macedonians alike. In de Certeau's terms, these new businesses and the audience they brought altered collective *expectations* about the codes of propriety of the Čaršija. The area, which used to be seen as a traditional Albanian and Muslim place, is being frequented by more and more members of the other community.

However, one should not exaggerate the extent of such transgressions to the narrative of the divided city. The revitalisation process concerns only a small area limited to one or two streets at the entrance of the old town, which are used to epitomise the Čaršija – or even Skopje – as a whole by those who oppose the scenario of the

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<sup>7</sup> A typical Macedonian place where people drink beer.

divided city. One of these, heading towards the Kale fortress, comprises several new cafés: a Macedonian *pivarnica*, where many litres of beer are consumed every day, is next to an Albanian nargileh café and a Turkish place where alcohol is not served. The location of this area, at the beginning of the neighbourhood, may lead the visitor to think that the whole Čaršija has become a ‘hype’ place where a new kind of social interaction takes place. Yet, except these two streets, most of the Čaršija has remained the same and no other new stores have opened. Moreover, although a Macedonian bar adjoins an Albanian and a Turkish cafés, it does not mean that their clients interact. Macedonians may be seen smoking the nargileh or drinking a Turkish coffee, but they do not sit at the same table as members of other communities and do not connect with the latter. In turn, Albanians and Turks do not frequent the Macedonian *pivarnica*. The co-presence of different ethnic groups in a same space does not imply intermixing. The lack of contact between clients of different communities could even be seen as a marker of urban division.

Yet, one should not forget that the Čaršija’s status from the end of the 1990s to the beginning of 2010s. As recalled by Mattioli (2013), while Macedonians would continue to cross ethnic lines in many other areas of the city, they would completely desert the old Bazaar, as if it were separated from the rest of Skopje. The perception of the place was not shaped ‘accordingly to their everyday negotiation of ethnic belonging, but as a response to a landscape of polarised ethnic conflict’ (Mattioli, 2013:12). Although I share this analysis, I disagree with Mattioli when he further states that the revitalisation of the Čaršija led to a gentrification of the place and the end of its specific status in the city. I do not think the recent and limited revitalisation process can be regarded as part of a gentrification of the Čaršija, which, apart from the very small area described above, has not changed much. There is less craftsmanship than fifty years ago, but the shops, barbers, cafés and restaurants have not much evolved, and prices and rental costs have not risen more than elsewhere in the city. Moreover, the old town has never lost its status as a place of *otherness* in Skopje. While intermixing is decreasing and urban space is being torn by dividing processes which polarise the city and its inhabitants, the Čaršija is one of the only spaces in the Macedonian capital which escapes this sectarian logic of separation. The revitalisation of the old town may not be a total success in terms of intermixing, but it marks a rupture in the *representation* of the old town. For more than a decade, the Čaršija was a stigmatised space in the eye of Macedonians, a place that did not belong to the city. While recent urban politics have

made every effort to confirm this image, the old town escaped this planned scenario by being associated to a new, unexpected representation, which came from below. In Lefebvrian terms, it could be argued that the Čaršija stands as a small yet visible crack in the *conceived space* of planners – a planned space which fails to be totally appropriated by the *lived space* of its inhabitants.

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city has undergone processes that have shaped its image as that of a divided city. The old town has been labelled ‘Ottoman’, ‘Turk’, ‘Muslim’, ‘Albanian’, ‘foreign’, ‘dangerous’ and ‘alien’. Yet, it has always escaped reconstruction schemes and, thwarting sectarian expectations, it kept its ethnic diversity. In a sense, the old tradition of intermixing and the new revitalisation of the place meet here: the Čaršija never stopped being a multiethnic space and, although ethno-national logics of division seem greater than ever elsewhere in the city, the recent reinvestment of the place by young generations renews the bazaar’s long-standing tradition of cultural intermingling and status of *otherness*. De Certeau would refer to a ‘dissonance’ or ‘noise’ in the normative landscape of the city, bringing to light the taken-for-granted image of the place as the behaviour expected there. As seen in the light of the survey, this new, different perception is not shared by a majority of Macedonians, and it has not yet been followed by a clear change of practices. Yet, I suggest that this change of view is a step through which the ‘naturalness’ of divisive representations is questioned and normative geographies transgressed.

Borders usually delimitate different spatial entities, but there may also be places inside these entities which are in rupture with their immediate environment, such as the Stara Čaršija, adjoining Macedonia and Skanderbeg Squares, the ‘Macedonian’ and ‘Albanian’ municipalities. While being part of the border zone, those places may work through interaction rather than separation, thus questioning the image of the divided city. Because these places introduce heterogeneity into ostensibly homogeneous entities, they to some extent challenge the ethno-nationalist narrative and the sectarian logic of division. Such areas are *interfaces* more than borders in the sense that they are places of exchange and complementarities. The Čaršija may not be the centre of divided Skopje anymore, but it certainly is that of cosmopolitan Skopje.

## 2.2 Transgressive actions

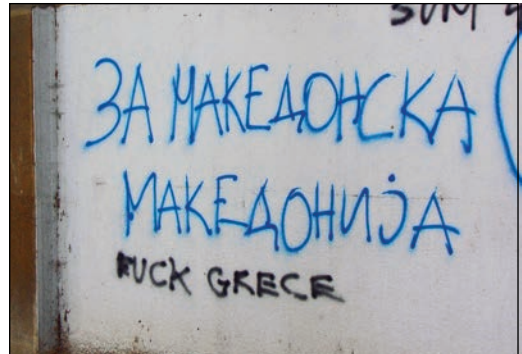
Simple acts, such as using a facility not meant to be used by certain categories of people or refusing to wear an expected mask, might transgress the rules of a place, even if these actions have only a ephemeral existence. While they are often difficult to observe, subversive actions may leave a more or less visible trace on space. This is the case of graffiti and other forms of street art, one of the most visible traces of transgression in urban space, which I will analyse in this section, before focusing on a more subtle, unintentional form of transgression through which the codes of propriety of the divided city are challenged.

Transgressive places are not specific to revolutionaries. Similarly, people who want to overthrow an established order do not have the monopoly of transgressive actions. As seen previously, any individual may escape the system she is part of, not by openly rejecting or attacking it, but through flexible and ephemeral actions – what de Certeau (1980) referred to as *tactics*. Tactics shed light on the alleged ‘naturalness’ of a situation, question the common *expectations* and rules of propriety of a place, and turn the commonly accepted *doxa* into an *orthodoxy*. Graffiti is an example of such tactic. Many geographers have written about graffiti and it is not my intention here to provide a full review of these works. I will only briefly outline the issues at stake with graffiti and focus on the apparition of new kinds of graffiti in Skopje as a transgressive practice through which urban dwellers subvert hegemonic narratives. As a piece of writing or an image illegally inscribed on a wall or a building, it enables a marginal or controversial message to enter public space. By doing so, it ‘confronts and contradicts the ordered and ordering space of institutional life’ (David and Wilson, 2002:43) and challenges hegemonic power. Graffiti is seen as ‘rebellious, irrational, dirty, and irreducibly “other”’ (Cresswell, 1996: 45). Because of the strong reactions it triggers, graffiti questions boundaries and reveals ‘the role of implicit normative geographies in the ordering of “appropriate” behavior’ (*ibid.*:38). The fight over graffiti is a fight over disorder and different meanings of place.

Political graffiti are common in Skopje. Walking through the city allows the visitor to see a range of inscriptions reading ‘VMRO until death’, ‘Death to the Shiptari’ or ‘Macedonia forever’ on the southern bank and ‘Ethnic Albania’ or ‘Albania forever’ on the northern side (*figure 33*). Sectarian contents seem to dominate Skopje’s graffiti. With Skopje 2014, a new range of graffiti appeared in the city centre, often directly



a: 'Death to the Shiptars'



b: 'For a Macedonian Macedonia'



c: 'Respect the Albanian vote'



photos: O. Véron

Figure 33: Banal nationalism and ethno-sectarian graffiti

inscribed on the construction sites surrounding the new buildings, reading '*Think critically*' or '*Hang the politicians with the intestines of the priests*', to name only two (figure 34). In contrast with Skopje conventional graffiti, these inscriptions do not have any sectarian meaning, nor do they mark an ethno-national territory in the city. On the contrary, their action directly target sectarian projects in urban space, such as Skopje 2014 and Skanderbeg Square, hence they can be seen as undermining divisive representations of the Macedonian society. The statues or monuments are usually heavily guarded and made in damage-resistant material, so as to discourage any expressions of discontent. Yet, contestation is not so easily dispelled. De Certeau described transgression as microbe-like operations proliferating within the system's structures. Authors of graffiti always find a way to mark space: graffiti are written on the protective metal equipment surrounding statues or in the close vicinity of the new buildings. These ephemeral inscriptions are a means for some inhabitants to reclaim the right to these spaces.

They are also a provocation for the authorities, since the main square is constantly filmed by surveillance cameras. Daring to inscribe a transgressive phrase under the nose of the authorities is a way to challenge both the physical presence and the functionality of surveillance and thus, test its limits. As Mitchell and Kelly (2010) underlined in the case of Belfast, surveillance may thus be used within tactics, as well as in a way that challenges power. From an illegal action, the graffiti becomes an act of resistance because of its intention to provoke the authorities. As such, as argued by Hanauer (2004:30), it is a 'powerful mode of expression for groups [...] disenfranchised by wider society'. Not only does it subvert and challenge an institutional order, but it is also a way to reconstruct it. De Certeau would characterise this act as a 'recreation' of what is produced by power: such practices allow the users to reappropriate space and thus recreate their own ways of living. In Lefebvrian terms, graffiti are a prime example of a how space is 'reappropriated' by groups or individual who challenge *conceived space* by constructing their own *lived space*. These inscriptions may be quickly removed, but their temporary existence proves that Big Brother is never omnipotent.

Such a process of 'recreation' or 'reappropriation' also occurs through other forms of transgression, which subvert the meaning of the Skopje 2014 monuments. A tactic is often a way to refuse the established order by turning the actual order of things to its own ends: as de Certeau (1980) noticed, it is similar to a 'trick'. Transgression combines manipulation and enjoyment: there is pleasure in getting around the rules that





a: Right under Alexander the Great statue : “Let’s hang the politicians with the intestines of the priests !”



b: On the Stone bridge : ‘Think critically’

Source: balkaninsight.com

Figure 34: Subversive graffiti on Macedonia Square



constrain space. Among the first statues to be placed on the main square, we find the two *shmizli* described in Chapter 5, represented as walking in a distracted way and carrying shopping bags. One morning, the statues appeared with books in their empty hands. Someone had deliberately decided to subvert the meaning of these statues – female superficiality – and mock it by proposing an alternative vision – women can read too. This action is an insinuation into the system imposed from the top and, at the same time, a diversionary *way of using* one of its components. Putting a book in the hands of these *shmizli* is a way of escaping the place without leaving it: neither *in* the system nor *outside* it – just *in between*. It maintains a difference in the same space the authorities are imposing.

Tactics do not entail an intentionality to transgress. There is sometimes an accidental event or moment through which the tacit adhesion with the contract controlling the appearances of a place is broken. Unintended and often subtle, such practices nonetheless produce a dissonance with the surrounding harmony of a neighbourhood, a shop or a street and therefore challenge their established codes of propriety.

During my third fieldwork, I lived about fifteen minutes' walk from Macedonia Square. Down my building were several businesses, including a hairdresser, a café, a barber and a newsagent, as well as an office of a branch of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Most of the people frequenting this office were members of ethnic minorities who lived outside the neighbourhood in predominantly non-Macedonian areas. Their very presence could be felt by an external observer as well as inhabitants of the neighbourhood as a rupture with the tacit rules of the area, which was defined as 'Macedonian'. The clothes they wore, the veil covering the women's hair, the language they spoke and their mannerisms clashed with the codes of propriety of the neighbourhood. From their appearance, an inhabitant could immediately tell that these people did not belong in this place. To some extent, their very presence could be considered as a sort of break, a point of rupture with the perfectly ordered code of propriety of the neighbourhood.

However, because it was an *expected* presence, framed by predetermined times of the day (the opening hours of the office) and motivated by precise reasons, it cannot be considered a form of subversion. Furthermore, most of the visitors' practices were in line with the neighbourhood's rules of practice: whereas most inhabitants of the

neighbourhood sat in the café adjoining the Ministry to enjoy a cup of coffee and a conversation, none of the ‘foreigners’ would have done the same, despite having often to wait hours for their turn to come. Moreover, they were usually accompanied by their husband or wife, and sometimes their children or relatives. Rather than ‘officialising’ their presence by sitting at the café, they preferred to stand in the street, marking their presence as transitory and motivated only by necessity. Yet, sometimes, an action of transgression occurred, as subtle as unexpected. One morning, I was surprised to see two women sitting on the bench facing the entrance of my bloc. They were not the usual neighbours who used to sit there every day and talked for a couple of hours before returning home. Their veil, long dresses and language suggested that they were Albanians who went to the Ministry office. Although located in a public space, this bench was usually occupied in a rather ‘private’ manner by the people who lived in the building, as an extension of their own house. Albanians are generally discreet when they are in mainly Macedonian neighbourhoods, as the testimony of S., a German NGO representative, indicates:

I realise that when I go with Albanian friends in Macedonian areas, they are afraid to talk in Albanian... it could create problems. They prefer to cross Macedonian areas in silence and as quickly as possible.<sup>8</sup>

The two women sat there for an hour. During this time, no one dared join them and sit, although the two benches allowed for six people to sit at the same time (usually, people came and went, and joined others in a rather free basis). These two women were visibly transgressing one of the neighbourhood’s tacit laws, and that precise transgression was immediately noticed by everyone. Sitting on this bench meant more than simply waiting somewhere for one’s turn at the Ministry: it meant departing from the norm and appropriating the area by marking it as ‘their’ territory, even if temporarily. Although seemingly innocuous and probably even unconscious, this action nonetheless subverted the pre-determined scenario of the divided city according to which ‘foreigners’ should not behave as inhabitants in a neighbourhood. *This isn’t done.*

In this section, I analysed how ephemeral or seemingly trivial actions disrupt the play of normative practices upon which the narrative and geography of the divided city are based. By examining how these acts fracture the normality of such representations, I

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<sup>8</sup> Interview, September 2010.

attempted to draw attention on the alternative representations. Constructed by the everyday practices of Skopje's inhabitants, they show the limits of the ethno-nationalisation of urban space. As I argued with the example of political graffiti, the line between transgression and resistance is sometimes thin: in the next section, I will explore in more detail how acts of open resistance oppose the sectarian logic of division by creating their counter-spaces in Skopje.

### **3 Spaces of resistance**

As seen in Chapter 6, Skanderbeg Square cannot be considered an act of resistance. Yet, there are sites of open contestation in Skopje, where hegemonic powers are defied and alternative readings to the Macedonian/Albanian struggle paradigm are found. Despite strong disincentives towards cross-community discourses, these places, or moments, of contestation are embodied by new kinds of networks and non-governmental groups. Through a close analysis of two urban social movements, I examine here how the planned scenario of the divided city may be challenged by alternative narratives which oppose counter-spaces to dominant representations of space. This section advances my argument that it is through such practices that those excluded from power may subvert sectarian logics and affirm their own right to the city.

#### **3.1 Urban social movements**

The emergence of urban social movements in Macedonia is a rather new phenomenon. Not to say there has not been any movement of protest against national or federal policies in the past, but the forms assumed and the claims expressed by the groups which currently take to the street in Skopje are a novelty. Balkan countries have never been characterised by a tradition of civil society and Macedonia is not an exception to the rule, with low levels of social mobilisation, except for ethnic issues. In such a context, acts of grassroots mobilisation in the capital city could not pass unnoticed – especially when they occupy the city centre to protest against the new urban projects in a rather original way.

As I argued in Chapter 5, part of the government project is to make Skopje similar to Western European cities. For the VMRO-DPMNE, the city could not be

considered the capital as long as its main square did not include a church. This explains why the ruling party has always been keen to establish such a building and why it used the pretext of the 1963 destruction of the Saints Constantine and Helena church to bring its project to a successful end. Shortly after the plan to replace the destroyed church was made public, in February 2009, young activists, architects and simple citizens launched a series of protests and public events (*figure 35*) to oppose a project they considered illegitimate. Among these activities, two movements stood out: *Prva Arxi Brigada* – the ‘First Archi Brigade’ – and *Ploshtad Sloboda* – ‘Freedom Square’.

Both the *Prva Arxi Brigada* and *Ploshtad Sloboda* follow Castells’ definition of an urban social movement, presented in Chapter 1. Both make demands about public space, that is to say a space shared collectively where the state should guarantee an equal access to goods and services. Both are organisations formed by urban residents to protest about changes occurring in their immediate environment and which concern its cultural identity. As a proof, their names which, in both cases, bear a direct reference to Skopje’s urban space (‘architecture’ and ‘square’, referring here to Skopje’s architecture and Macedonia Square). Finally, both movements politically mobilise around issues which concern the state and the municipality.

The *Prva Arxi Brigada* introduces itself as ‘an informal group of architecture students and young architects who share the same ideas’ and feel compelled to express their opinion regarding Skopje urban projects. Prompted by a concern to preserve and enhance the architectural heritage of Skopje, in particular that of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the group’s initial motivations were ‘to take a proactive role in designing today’s architectural reality’ by denouncing what they see as ‘a negative tendency in the city’. The movement’s approach is one of ‘guerrilla action’ in support of ‘an architectural uprising’. It aims at redirecting public attention and empowering Skopje’s citizens in order for them to ‘become actors in the building of their city’s future instead of remaining merely passive observers’. With means such as discussions, internet communication, workshops and public events, the group’s first goal is to ‘raise awareness’ and stimulate thought about ‘situations in the city’, without staying only at a local scale but by ‘internationalising local problems and bringing them to a higher level’.<sup>9</sup>

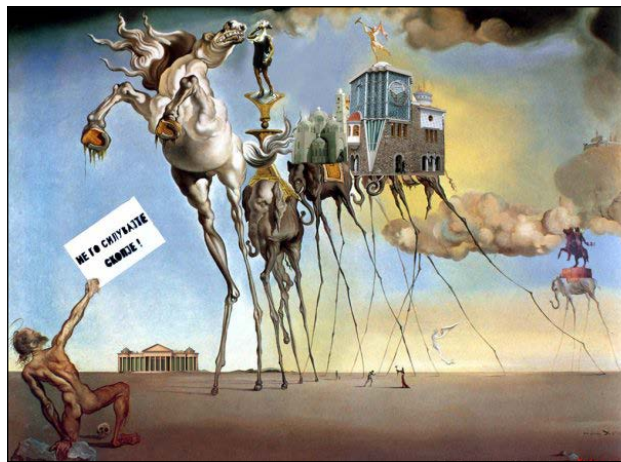
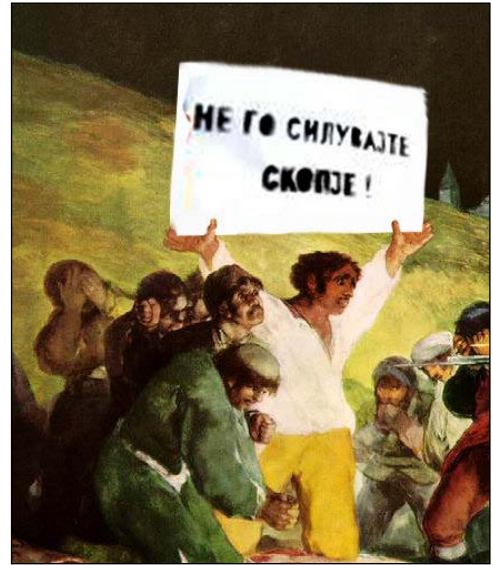
One of the first attempts of the Brigade to protest against what they called the

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<sup>9</sup> Sources: <http://pab.blog.mk/>; [http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61204922527&v=info](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61204922527&v=info;); <http://www.seenetwork.org/initiatives/24/> [accessed March, 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010]



a: 'Don't rape Skopje'



c: 'No to religious buildings on the Square' (Ploshtad Sloboda)



b: The First Architecture Uprising (First Archi Brigade)



d: 'The Right to Skopje'

Source: okno.com

Figure 35: Public protests against the 'rape' of public space

'rape' of space by sectarian politics was directed against the planned construction of the church on Macedonia Square. The term of *rape* was first used on March 28, 2009, when architecture students organised a protest in the city centre, joined by civic activists and citizens who shared the same ideals. Arguing that the square was one of the busiest pedestrian precincts in the city, they denounced the congestion caused by a building which would also not be in keeping with the architecture of the place. Holding signs saying '*Don't rape Skopje*', they opposed the attempt to occupy public space, which they considered similar to a 'rape' of the city and, by metonymy, of its inhabitants. This metaphor reflects the strong perception of activists who accused the state and the municipality of resorting to force, coercion and abuse of authority to assault citizens against their consents. The etymology of 'rape', from the Latin *raptus*, 'to snatch, to grab, to carry off', implies a physical act, which does not necessarily have a sexual connotation, but can also refer to an act of abduction. 'Raping' urban space means violently usurping and kidnapping it, as well as physically injuring it. With the Square carried off by force, citizens are deprived of their fundamental right to the city. This is why protesters declared to fight for the right of Macedonia Square to remain public. More significantly, a rape refers to the reality of a gender-based sexual violence. In the case of Skopje, this violence seems in line with the ideology of the Skopje 2014 project, which, as I argued, seeks to establish a particularly gendered reading of national identity. Protesting against the 'rape of Skopje' could therefore be analysed as protesting against the gendering and sexualisation of the city. Activists formed a human circle to symbolise the perimeter of the planned church and to make people understand the scope of the project. This protest and performance may not have drawn much attention had it not been dramatically crushed by a counter-protest by representatives of the Orthodox Church and ethnic Macedonian nationalists, carrying crosses and led by priests. While the counter-protesters attacked the activists and beat them, police officers did not intervene. Many circumstantial elements suggested state participation in such a violent counter-attack. Prime Minister Gruevski openly sided with the Orthodox partisans and accused the opposition of having prompted the demonstration. His insistence that the church would be built despite the protests explained why the project was quickly called 'Gruevski's church'.<sup>10</sup> As explained by an activist who was present at the protest:

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<sup>10</sup> Balkan Insight, 'Construction of controversial Skopje church begins', 14/05/2012, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/construction-of-controversial-skopje-church-begins> [accessed 19/05/2012]

If you see the video of the fight, you can see that there were my friend and I, looking at each other, laughing and saying: '*Fools! They don't know what they're doing! They're going to turn the entire public against them!*' We were maybe 200 or 300 and they were ten times as many as us. The fight was completely unexpected. I think it was the first counter-protest organised by the government or the party – whatever you call this social group... And after that, each time there was a protest, they would show up, not the same group, but always a counter-protest. In order to unite a group, to get people out, to protest, you need more than a simple message, especially a lousy one: you need phone calls, you need people to know each other, etc. And you can be sure that, in the case of these people, it was not 'natural' and legitimate [...] We were so wrong to laugh...<sup>11</sup>

For many protesters, this day marked a turning-point in their commitment to fighting the current urban policies. As mentioned by an activist interviewed by Vangeli (2011:11), 'nobody imagined that that debate *pro* or *contra* building a church would end up in a violently interrupted right to protest'. It meant that if, in Skopje, hegemonic power comes under actual material challenge, then the people resisting are repressed using violence.

The demonstration was not organised solely by the Brigade. Civic activists who were until then, according to their own words, 'a group of friends involved in some kind of urban activism' and calling themselves 'progressive syndicates'<sup>12</sup>, helped organised the event. After the dramatic counter-protest, they decided to found a legal association, *Ploshtad Sloboda*. Vangeli (2011:11) gives us a valuable testimony of what 'that day' meant for one of the group's members:

[I] figured out that I [was] part of this initiative, not only because of my disagreement with the current urban 'policy', usurpation of public space and [the process of] desecularisation [...], but also for [defending] the right to have freedom of expression of different opinion, the right of independent civic actions, the right to protest and the right to be safeguarded by the police while doing it, and the right to fight with arguments for what we believe and not be stigmatised for that.

This 'battle' on the main square turned the members of *Ploshtad Sloboda*, from an informal group of young people opposed to 'nationalism and religious fundamentalism',

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<sup>11</sup> Interview, August 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, August 2011.



into a ‘civil association’ concerned about ‘democratic issues’ and, only a month after the protest, an NGO fighting for ‘activism, theory and art’.<sup>13</sup> From then on, the movement endeavoured to preserve ‘the integrity of public space’, but it also fought against ‘the prevailing illiberal discourse in Macedonian politics’ (Vangeli, 2011:11). The 28<sup>th</sup> of March was followed by a series of protests<sup>14</sup>, public debates and cultural actions, which I analyse below. Both *Ploshtad Slobada* and the *Prva Arxi Brigada* are typical social urban movements. Each group is similarly characterised by the wish to protect its home environment, and each also pursues more universalistic values. However, as I will now examine, these goals may not always converge.

### 3.2 Urban heritage and identitarian politics

Both organisations defend their immediate physical surrounding, but they are not one and the same movement. What distinguishes *Ploshtad Slobada* from the *Prva Arxi Brigada* is the relative salience of more general themes in their respective discourses, in particular cultural heritage and anti-fascism.

After the Skopje 2014 project was made public, the Brigade waged campaigns against ‘bad taste’, ‘kitsch’ and the ‘usurpation of public space’. The attachment to Skopje as ‘their’ city is often present in the activists’ discourses. This explains why their identification with the city seems more important than with the nation or the ethnic community. It is in the name of this urban identity that they oppose the ‘degradation’ of the town by current policies and the manipulation of urban memory. The Brigade is indeed deeply involved in the preservation of a cultural heritage that seems threatened by the new projects. Whereas the socialist period has been deliberately forgotten by the new planners who perceive it as an ‘empty’ parenthesis in the urban history of Skopje, the young architects give it pride of place. The work of Kenzo Tange and the ‘Open city’ project in particular is often put forwards as a valuable heritage which makes Skopje ‘different’ from its Balkan urban neighbours. As explained by a Brigade member:

What the government wants to hide is the modernity of Skopje. [...] Our

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<sup>13</sup> Interview, August 2011

<sup>14</sup> According to one of its organisers, the anniversary protest that took place one month after the first one gathered between 12 000 and 15 000 people (interview, October 2010). Although I do not want to cast doubt upon the sincerity of my interviewee, this figure seems a bit of an exaggeration.



cultural heritage is neglected, so the idea is to create a new one. [...] The government started projects to build a new identity for the city, but we already have one.<sup>15</sup>

The activists of *Ploshtad Sloboda* have rather attempted to mobilise against state-framed nationalism, the involvement of religion in politics, and the way in which the integrity of public space has been violated by identitarian planning policies. Because urban authorities seek to impose a single definition of public space, their policies do not only affect the integrity of public space, they are also a threat to more universal values, such as that of democracy, equality and freedom of thought. The activists do not simply oppose nationalism in urban space: they denounce attempts at homogenising, taking up and transforming public space into a landscape. They oppose nationalist urban policies because they seek to control social interactions in public space and because of their excluding character. Activists fight as much the hegemonic and homogenising occupation of public space as their own exclusion from both this space and the society as a whole. Their claims therefore articulate an alternative identity as urban inhabitants and citizens.

Not only does the movement support the interests of minorities in architecture and planning, it supports also a plural and inclusive conception of identity based on post-nationalism. Such claims go further than local interests and instigate deeper political and social changes. Current urban policies are a symbol of broader issues concerning the whole Macedonian society. This may explain the ‘disgust’ of *Ploshtad Sloboda* towards the government’s projects and attitude, as voiced by one activist:

People like me who don’t support Skopje 2014 and dislike it just don’t show up on Macedonia Square. I run away from it, I can’t, I can’t look at it, it’s disgusting, it’s beyond any standards... it’s simply disgusting. It’s not just the brutality of the statues and the aesthetics of the whole thing: it’s the idea.<sup>16</sup>

Members of both *Ploshtad Sloboda* and the *Prva Arxi Brigada* were placed under strong political pressure after the first protest on the square, via lawsuits, threats, anonymous calls, loss of jobs, housing evictions and being followed in public<sup>17</sup>, a process which resulted in a loss of integrity, faith and support for the activists. As explained by a member of *Ploshtad Sloboda*:

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<sup>15</sup> Interview, October 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Interview, August 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Interviews, September 2010-August 2011.

They have better resources, time, people who work to discredit your cause, and, one by one, they achieve their ends. They kicked Y. out of work, X. out of her social apartment; they give the police some material to prosecute you... There's pressure everywhere. And it's not only our groups, but others who oppose them. They discredit you and it doesn't matter whether it is true or not: it's on TV so you're discredited – even if your whole life and reputation is invested. And they keep saying on TV that we are agents of the opposition party, as if it were some kind of war. The disappointing thing is that some of your acquaintances, friends and relatives believe in those rumours [...] because they're not sure, they don't have any media education, so that they don't know how to differentiate between propaganda and information. Your motivation then gets lower and lower because nobody supports you, everybody mistrusts you. And, you know, usually support helps a lot, especially if you're doing things in public!<sup>18</sup>

Everything seems to indicate the power of the disincentives for proposing alternative ideas to dominant representations of space in Skopje. Ostracism from their social environment and community is the frequent response to those who seek to bring sectarian barriers down. However, such attempts may be considered as part of the struggle for the *oeuvre* that Lefebvre (1996:154) was calling for with all his might, that is to say a form of participatory urban democracy to overcome divisions, in the form of a collective work in which all citizens take part, seeking to create new modes of living and inhabiting space as the only way to end segregation.

The resistance by *Ploshtad Sloboda* and the *Prva Archi Brigade* seems to fit the centre/periphery analysis developed by Lefebvre. The state's techniques and programmes are not totally accepted by urban society, but they are challenged and opposed by marginal outgroups which seek to invest space with values other than the hegemonic ones. In order to do so, they attempt to create their own *lived space* through public events, and by taking art to the street and intending to make their happenings *seen* and *heard* by the public in an inclusive manner. However, such initiatives are violently opposed by those who want to deprive the inhabitants of their status as *citadins*, and deny them the fundamental right to the city for all, regardless of their ethnic, religious or social affiliation.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview, August 2011.

Shortly after the Skanderbeg project was made public, some activists who had supported the protests against Skopje 2014 alongside the *Prva Arxi Brigada* and *Ploshtad Sloboda* celebrated the initiative of the Municipality of Čair and the value this step had for the Albanian minority. Some of them were members of *Zgjohu!*<sup>19</sup> – a NGO chiefly made up of Albanians – and were proud to witness the birth of a project so meaningful for the community. Activists from *Zgjohu!* were also in first line in the Kale fortress incident. Conversely, many of the movements formerly allied to *Zgjohu!* – some composed of Albanians, but most of Macedonians – criticised the idea of Skanderbeg Square. Giving the Albanian leadership the opportunity to create its own project in Skopje has not only enabled the government to remove one of the main arguments from its opponents (the accusation of only supporting ethnic Macedonian Skopje); in addition to silencing Albanian opposition by satisfying one of its demands, it above all divided the opposition to its own enterprise.

To this ethnic division, one should add the division of the movement's 'hard core', that is to say the differences that prevent it from being one and united. An external observer may be surprised by the lack of unity among Skopje's activists and by the number of subgroups which compose it. But this differentiation was visible from the start, as explained by a member of *Ploshtad Sloboda*:

During the fight on the city square, there were two groups. Ok, we were thinking of ourselves as one group, but still: there was one group interested in the space that the church was supposed to take – architecture students – and the other – us – who were mostly anti-religious people, some of us being hard-core atheists... And that's why they [the counter-protesters] showed up on the city square. There was the fight, and then there was a shift in focus, because we were so surprised that it actually happened that we needed to change the focus. From then on, the debate was no more on town planning, nationalism or religion, it was about the right to protest.<sup>20</sup>

Being asked whether the first demonstration was mainly against the usurpation of public space or the religious project, the answer of *Ploshtad Sloboda* is clear:

It was the second one. But the architects got scared, they said: 'We don't want anybody to think that we are against the Church, blah blah...' We argued about it until the last day before the protest, and we finally decided to

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<sup>19</sup> *Zgjohu!* ('Wake up!') is the short name of *Lëvizja Qytetare ZGJOHU!*, which means 'Wake up, Citizens! movement'.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, August 2011.

let them have it and to protest about the space of the square. Even though I care about space and I agree with their arguments, I believe that building a church there instead of a kindergarden is a statement. If the project was to build a kindergarden, I would have opposed it, but I wouldn't have been there, protesting. Or whatever it could have been: a cultural centre, a museum for arts, etc. It's not just about space: it's also about something bigger.<sup>21</sup>

This lack of unity suggests that relations of power may have a certain direction, but they are complex, multidimensional and not predetermined. As explained by Cresswell (1996), the *dominant/dominated* relation is not about two mutually exclusive groups of people, nor is a hegemonic landscape ever fixed or static. As I argued previously, space results from the continuing struggle between dominant and subordinate cultural groups: it is always changing. In given contexts, we make judgments about who has power over whom. Domination is never absolute, and resistance is not a homogeneous block. Both need to be apprehended in relation to a discursive process. As is the case in Skopje, power is a 'relational effect of social interaction' (Allen, 2003:2) and should be seen as situational. I suggested in Chapter 6 that the centre may be heterogeneous, composed of subgroups, and that it does not stand as a unique entity. The same applies to attempts to counter its hegemonic representation. In his reading of Lefebvre, Allen (2003) writes that the same space may host a variety of cross-cutting social spaces. Together, these heterogeneous and varying entities constitute diverse geographies of power in urban space.

As argued previously, acts of transgression and resistance join to form momentary spaces of subversion. It is through these relations and *moments* of subversion – moments that Lefebvre (1947:348) defined as '*the attempt to achieve the total realization of a possibility*' – that hegemonic representations are challenged and the image of the divided city destabilised. As recalled by Cresswell (1996), place is constantly constructed by the active conflicts of meanings and geographies as they are produced by different groups or individuals. Allen (2003) suggests that power is not a uniform and continuous substance transmitted across space and time, it is *constituted in* space and time. To Arendt (1958), power is generated through mutual action and is always of the moment – a conception of power she closely associated with that of public space: 'public space emerges whenever and wherever, in Arendt's words "men act

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<sup>21</sup> Interview, August 2011.

together in concert”. On this model, public space is the space “where freedom can appear” (Benhabib, 1992:93, cf. Allen, 2003:54). Popular revolt, to Arendt, is a positive gesture whose force lies less in the act of resistance in itself than in its potential for empowerment. I suggest that it is through these moments of tension between an act of subversion and its reception by the public that real alternative readings of the city may emerge and that the public, at least momentarily, departs from any fixed representation of urban society. I will now analyse these moments of resistance which, I suggest, occur through artistic practices in urban space.

### **3.3 Arts of resistance**

Lefebvre defined domination as the closing down of possibilities about the meaning of space, and resistance to this domination as the capacity to formulate alternatives, counter-spaces. Yet, he did not raise an important issue: how activist groups and hegemonic elites treat differently the public. Whereas urban authorities rely on the full adhesion of their audience through a landscape which gives the illusion of transparency, activists shed light on the *pentimento*, that is to say the alterations of the painting, the very process of creation itself. By showing what lies behind appearances, they display the constructed nature of public space as a landscape and the process through which it is socially produced. The end of this suspension of disbelief implies the participation of the viewer who, from a mere spectator, becomes an actor. This process, common in modern art, is borrowed by activists to arouse reflective thinking among urban inhabitants. My discussion here extends the analysis previously developed in this chapter, offering a more subtle understanding of subversion in public space through an analysis of resistance as an aesthetic process.

Lefebvrian ‘moments’ inspired Guy Debord’s ‘situations’, although Debord (1999) sought to distinguish the two notions by emphasising the spatial aspect and constructed nature of the situation, as opposed to the temporal, ‘natural’ dimension of the moment. Debord (1955:1) forged the concept of ‘psychogeography’ to define a new, active approach to urban space – ‘the study of the precise law and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviours of individuals’. The idea of actively exploring the possibilities of urban space through new forms of art and contestation was at the core of this situationist

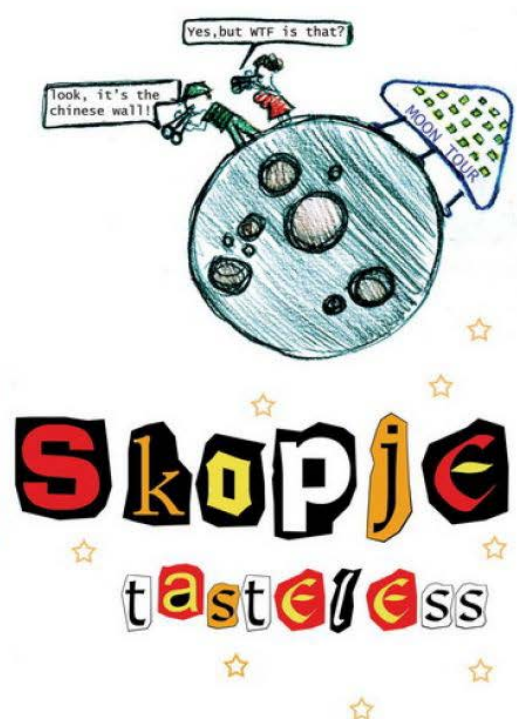
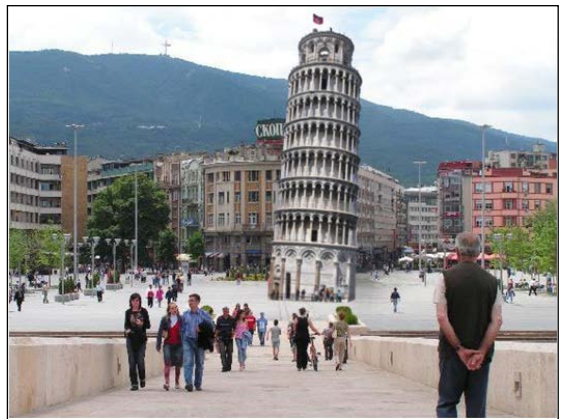
approach. Its attempt to transgress boundaries between art and everyday space through artistic practice had much influence on contemporary artists and activists, forming what Pinder (2003) defines as two interconnected themes: ‘rights to the city’ and ‘writing the city’. By engaging with urban space and integrating the public as a participant to their artistic projects – or ‘situations’ –, psychogeographical practices of exploration may challenge and help construct alternatives to dominant representations in/of urban space.

This is precisely what Skopje’s activists seek to do in order to protest against the usurpation of space. Art as is used a fighting tool to involve the audience and, from passive residents, make them citizens who actively take part in their surrounding environment. Artistic performances in public space are best exemplified by the choir, the *Raspeani Skopjani* (the ‘Singing Skopjani’). This choir gathers members of *Ploshtad Sloboda* and organises filmed flashmobs covering famous engaged songs or distorting their lyrics and satirically applying them to the political context of Skopje. The performance usually takes place in the street, the visibility of which invites the pedestrian to stop by and listen to the songs that will be posted on Youtube later on and publicised via Facebook or other social media. Hand in hand with the alternative publisher *Templum*, members of the *Raspeani Skopjani* also took part in the publication of a series of books entitled *The City*<sup>22</sup>, published in 2010 and 2011 and gathering interviews with architects and artists, as well as essays, poems and short-stories – all of them focusing on the issue of urban space and Skopje 2014.

This collaboration has given birth to a website, *okno* (‘window’), which works as a portal for urban activism. Besides editorials and reflexive articles, activists also publish artistic creations, often in the form of distorted representations of Skopje 2014 (*figure 36*). The power of such images lies in their use of parody to mock an existing reality, Skopje 2014, by means of satiric imitation (*figure 37a*). By implicitly comparing its patchwork architecture with a sort of Disneyland, with monuments going from the tower of Pisa and the Pyramids to Godzilla and a flying cow, they ridicule the project by deliberately exaggerating its magnitude. They also shed light on the artificial nature of the landscape that is created by the state. This method of *détournement*, or ‘hijacking’, was at the heart of the situationist approach, which distorted established representations through caricature and parody. Such approach leads the viewer to open her eyes on the surrounding reality and involve her as an actor of her environment. This relation to the

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<sup>22</sup> *Mess and Grotesque, Stolen City!, Architorture and Gravalisation* (in Macedonian *Grobalizacija*, a pun hard to translate literally, between *globalizacija*, ‘globalisation’ and *grob*, ‘the grave’), *Skopjani Tales of 2014* and *The City and the Future*.



Realisation: O. Véron January 2013

Source: okno.com

Figure 36: Skopje 2014, mocked by Macedonian artists



audience often implies the establishment of an ephemeral complicity. As Merrifield argues:

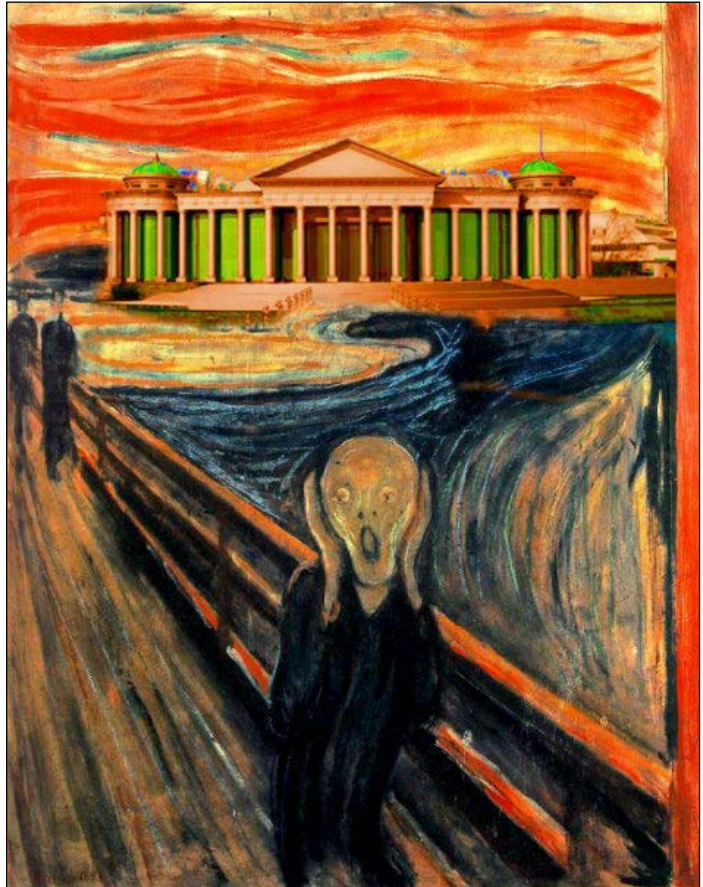
They'd force people to think and rethink what they once thought; often you'd not know whether to laugh or to cry. Either way, *détournement* couldn't be ignored: it was an instrument of propaganda, agitprop, an arousal of indignation, action that stimulated more action (Merrifield, 2006:34).

Such a *détournement* occurred, for instance, when activists chose to revisit Duchamp's *Fountain* by installing golden toilets on Macedonia Street late at night (*figure 37b*). The 'sculpture' remained there two days before being removed by the police. Local authorities had not taken any steps before because they did not know whether the new 'statue' was part of Skopje 2014 or not – to the delight of subversive outgroups and many pedestrians. What is striking in the presence of these toilets in a frequented public space is not so much the act of subversion in itself than the connivance it implied with the public. Because of its visibility, the object could not pass unnoticed and forced the walker to engage with it, whether through astonishment, laughter or sympathy. It is precisely through this reaction, which transcends ethnic and social barriers as well as any balances of power, that *conceived space* is momentarily challenged and *lived space* constructed. For a short moment, the pedestrian takes part in this public performance and lifts the veil over the taken-for-granted environment. By this instant of complicity, she constructs the alternative space sketched by urban activists. In Skopje, this experimental, mischievous form of art is also a way to question the complicity of the arts in recent urban projects and the aestheticisation of sectarianism and exclusion.

It is through this interaction that urban inhabitants may escape the normative image of the divided city – an image in which he/she is named, identified, labelled; an image where, in order to exist, one has to belong to a group and where one's identity needs to be strictly defined. As Bourdieu writes (1980:210), 'a vision of the world is a division of the world' through which sectarianism endorses misleading and divisive representations on the reality. In the city, fighting this tendency means that the inhabitants should not be assigned one identity, as members of either the 'majority' or the 'minority', but each individual should be free to construct his own attributes as evolving and multiple. Pinder (2003:403) argues that 'experimenting with ways of writing the city is [...] vital for developing critical studies of the urban as well as this sense of its openness [...]'. Skopjani ought not to be first defined by their belonging to an ethnic or religious community, but first of all as urban inhabitants and citizens –



a: A parody of Munch's *Scream*, with the complex of the Constitutional Court in the background



b: Revisiting Duchamp's *Fountain*

Realisation: O. Véron January 2013

Source: okno.com

Figure 37: Subversive artistic performances

*citadins* as Lefebvre would say, that one could translate by the neologism ‘*cityzens*’, as opposed to only being ‘citizens’. Through participative activism, promoted by counter-culture groups, Skopjani may find ways around the scenarios established by sectarian politics. Through such actions the *cityzen* might be able to refuse forced attachment and imposed representation, and may imagine his/her own reading of the city.

## Conclusion

This chapter advanced my argument that the city is a place where counter-narratives and alternative identities emerge through daily interactions and unexpected interactions. De Certeau referred to the social ‘masks’ urban dwellers have to wear in public space: although common to any city, this idea of a masquerade appears particularly appropriate in Skopje. The city is a theatre whose direction assigns each inhabitant to a determined role from which she is not allowed to depart. Yet, as this chapter argued, people have also the power to subvert and resist hegemonic narratives, and assert their rights to be different. Both *resistance* and *transgression* participate in the formation of spaces of subversion. I showed that it is through these spaces or the *situation* of their creation that those usually excluded from power may challenge the divided city and affirm their own right to the city.

On the night of the electoral victory of the ruling party, in June 2011, a young man was killed by one of the Prime Minister’s security guards. The first spontaneous protest which followed this death epitomises such a moment. Just after this tragic news was heard, several hundred Skopjani decided to proceed up Macedonia Street to Macedonia Square to denounce the state’s brutality. This march gathered individuals who did not specifically belong to any political party or alternative group, but who were united by one common goal: protesting against the impunity of the state and its power to control and appropriate urban space. For several weeks, other protests followed, organised via social networks, which denounced ‘Alfascism’<sup>23</sup> and the state’s omnipotence through the use of certain symbols, such as Big Brother’s moustaches or the V for Vendetta mask (*figure 38*). For one of the first times in the recent history of Skopje, these protests united ethnic Macedonians and Albanians (*figure 39*). These

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Alfascism’ is a combination of ‘alpha’ and ‘fascism’, ‘alpha’ designating an individual with the highest position in social hierarchy (as in an ‘alpha male’ in animal communities) towards whom other members of the community have to pay respect and exhibit deference. Demonstrators thus protested against the alleged fascism of the state and its one-power which everybody has to obey.



Figure 38: Protests against the State's brutality



Realisation: O. Véron June 2011



Banners in Macedonian read 'We want the truth' or 'Police State' and those in Albanian 'Stop violence' and 'Take care of the youth'.

Figure 39: Multiethnic protests by alternative subgroups

marches only gathered a small number of individuals – most of whom were students – who did not succeeded in channelling the spirit of the protests into a powerful social movement. Yet, they inspired solidarity among inhabitants and forced the state's hand: after a few weeks of denial, the government agreed to give up the alleged culprit and organise a trial.

These events are a powerful testimony against the traditional narrative of the divided city. Because they sought to denounce the central authorities' abuse of power, they were an act of resistance. Because they first emerged spontaneously and they united people, regardless of their cultural or ethnic background, they also transgressed the image of urban divisions. This unprecedented and unplanned interethnic mixing attained a high point when, in a highly symbolic move, one of the demonstrations crossed the Stone Bridge and marched into the Čaršija, uniting for a brief moment the south to the north, the majority to the minority, Skopje's inhabitants despite their ethnic identity. It is precisely when such moments occur that people re-conquer one of their most essential rights to the city, the right to *imagine*. Skopjani's right to imagine their own environment, implies the right to choose their own narrative for their city, a narrative free from of any sectarian preconceptions, a true *lived space*. It implies the right not to be excluded from a segment of the city, but to envision free access to public space regardless of one's culture, ethnicity or appearance. The right to freely construct one's own interactions and identities, rather than being forced to fit into pre-determined moulds. The right to be a *cityzen*.

## – CONCLUSION –

As indicated in my introduction and throughout the various paths followed by my thesis, I have sought to explore and analyse the concept of divided city, based on fieldwork in Skopje. I chose to examine the origins and processes at work in cities tagged as divided, by deconstructing the relationships between identity, territory and power in these spaces. I examined the implications of labelling a city as divided and argued that the divided city is a normative concept which may contribute to creating the reality it seeks to describe. Existing divisions and dividing tendencies may be strengthened or weakened over time, but analytical practices should not take part in these processes. Challenging the idea of an ontologically-given divided city, I suggested instead the concept of *dividing city* which enables a focus on the *processes* that bring a city to division.

In order to do so, I first sought to define and analyse what is meant by the term ‘divided city’ in Chapter 1. I chose to combine the literature on divided cities with ideas from critical urbanism and examine urban divisions as dynamic processes. By bridging these two areas of research that have often been considered as separate fields, I emphasised the process whereby divisions are made or reinforced, rather than the condition of division. An important argument of my thesis is that the divided city is an *image* before becoming a reality, which is achieved via a process that is shaped by top-down decisions which aim at asserting their own representations of space and society over the city and its inhabitants. My thesis provides an account of the role of urban elites in the construction of the *representation* of the divided city.

In the case of Skopje, I showed that the divided city has an officially-constructed memory rather than a real history (Chapters 3 and 4), and that an effective way for urban elites to clear themselves of responsibility for urban divisions is to make people believe in their atemporality. I showed that the conventional periodisation of Skopje’s history is part of a dominant narrative based on flawed historical assumptions and an erroneous understanding of Ottoman space. The categories and concepts applied today regarding Ottoman Skopje, such as ethnicity and ethnic identity, suggest far more

enclosed identities than were the case. The reality of urban divisions in Ottoman cities is more questionable than the official historiography suggests. This image of everlasting and irreversible divisions supports primordialist assumptions, which explain everything through ancient lines of separation, timeless nationalisms and the permanence of deep-rooted hatreds between ethnic groups. Such views are problematic in many respects. Not only do they assume the inevitability of urban divisions; they also deny the reality of intermingling and peaceful coexistence in multicultural space. They are also both a pretext and a justification for urban authorities – and external powers – not to intervene in dividing processes, as if nothing could be done against ‘destiny’ to prevent the city from dividing. This eventually implies that ethnic arguments formulated by national elites are to be taken at face value and that the only possible solutions to stop divisions or conflicts would have to be conceived along ethnic or cultural lines.

Yet, as I have argued, while the ethnic factor seems dominant in Skopje’s divisions, it is part of a political strategy. Chapter 4 explored the origins of Skopje as a divided city and showed that today’s urban divisions did not begin under the Ottoman Empire, but were a creation of the interwar government. And as argued in Chapter 5, political elites have a determinant role in the construction of divisive representations of urban space and society. Skopje therefore represents another instance of a situation where ethnic ties and nationalism have been activated in response to crisis. As elsewhere in former Yugoslavia, political elites have played an important part since the 1980s in triggering tensions along ethnic cleavages so as to create a domestic context in which ethnicity stands as the only politically relevant identity. While there is nothing natural about ethnic or cultural identity that requires it to be defined in an exclusive and conflictual way, existing tensions are constantly channelled and exacerbated as a weapon for political power. Yet, while nation-building in the Balkans occurred mostly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Macedonian ethnogenesis has been belated and it is only in 1991 that the country became independent. A regional latecomer, Macedonia is also an unfinished nation-state, since ethnic minorities make one-third of the republic’s population. The lack of recognition of its nation and its iconography, added to the uncertainty of its future as a unified republic, explains why Macedonian logic of ethno-nationalist politics took place a century at a more rapid and intense rhythm than its neighbours.

Although the critical theories of Foucault, Lefebvre and de Certeau have only seldom been used in the context of dividing cities (McCann, 1999; Nagle, 2009b; Kelly

and Mitchell, 2010), they provide useful keys for understanding spatial politics in such places. Their perspectives allowed me to examine the city from above, that is to say how cities may be politically constructed as divided and how sectarian politics may resort to architecture and planning to divide urban space and society symbolically and materially (Chapter 5). Studies of power and urban space look beyond the literature on ‘ethno-nationally divided cities’, which often ignores this meta-analytical dimension. In this way, I have tried to examine social interactions as dynamic processes which continuously shape urban space at different scales. Such approaches enable us to see space, not as a static resource where social processes occur, but as produced *through* social interactions. The literature on urban divisions would greatly benefit from reconceptualising urban space, not only as a potentially fragmented, partitioned or divided correlate of social relations, but as having the power to *produce* these relations, as suggested by critical theories of spatial politics. In particular, Lefebvre’s conceptual triad and understanding of resistance and hegemony are useful tools for investigating power relations in cities subject to dividing processes.

However, I also showed in Chapter 6 the need to complement such approaches and to qualify the centre/periphery narrative. Analysing a lived space as divided into two groups, a majority and a minority – no matter what these entities may include – means assuming the homogeneity and stability of groups and identities. Yet, as I argued, the dominant ethno-national paradigm embedded by ‘the Macedonians’ and ‘the Albanians’ is not a satisfactory reflection of the reality. By unquestionably accepting the normative representations forged by sectarian politics, it adopts a static understanding of power relations between determined entities and replicates the essentialisation of identities. According to this scheme, an individual cannot avoid being named, identified, labelled: in order to exist, she has to belong to a group which defines her identity. Even if the taxonomy is only practical, it is nonetheless effective. The issue at stake here therefore is not one of denomination, but of *categorisation*. Analysing urban space along one determined axis (ethnic identity) therefore means already accepting a scenario for the city as in a theatre play. The city appears as a stage in which a spectacle is performed and the various directors aim at attributing fixed roles to the inhabitants. In this public representation, the analyst is confined to the role of spectator, who takes the set for granted. What seems to be passive participation actually implies taking part in the show. Critical understanding of the dynamics through which a city may become divided requires a departure from the prism imposed by ethno-national politics. It means



questioning the deterministic and essentialising narrative of the divided city before attempting to analyse any cities referred to as ‘divided’.

By focusing on the on-going transformations of the city centre, I showed how the narrative of Skopje as a divided city is a constructed *representation* before being a reality. The very existence of this representation presents several risks. First, as an analytical template, it tends to differentiate some cities from others along the criterion of division: yet, what really distinguishes Skopje from other ‘undivided’ cities, expect a question of degree and of (constructed) self-perception? As an effective label, it also contains a danger of essentialisation and self-enclosure, which impacts on both urban space and society. Yet, as reflected in my work, urban borders are not a product of ethnic divisions but participate in creating them. As seen with Skopje 2014, political elites play a major role in drawing urban borders and separating communities. Finally, as a normative representation, the divided city narrative is an impediment to an essential right, the right not to be assigned a fixed identity from above or from the outside; in other words, the right to choose freely one’s mode or modes of *living* or *inhabiting* the city. This led me to analyse the city as a lived environment (Chapter 7). Rather than seeing Skopje as home to a struggle between pre-determined groups, I offered a more complex picture of urban politics that does not avoid the reality of unequal spatial and power relations. I examined in particular social practices that take up, reproduce or transgress dominant forms or codes of power on a routine basis. I suggest that analyses of urban divisions should see the city as shaped as much by the lived experiences of its residents as by hegemonic representations. Therefore, it should rely more often on an ethnographical analysis of the daily practices, discourses and perceptions of urban residents. De Certeau’s micro-scale approach has only once been applied to a ‘divided city’ (Kelly and Mitchell, 2010), yet it is extremely useful for exploring the tactics deployed by inhabitants in relation to hegemonic representations, via which, in their daily *uses* and practices, individuals may challenge or transgress scenarios imposed from above – in particular, that of the divided city.

I explored power relations in urban space through *situations* of subversion, that is to say when an interaction occurs between a subversive practice and its reception by the public. It is through such moments that those usually excluded from power are empowered and that true alternative meanings of the city are constructed to challenge hegemonic narratives. Participative activism indeed offers urban inhabitants a way to escape the scenarios imposed by sectarian politics and imagine their own reading of the

city. By removing the tag attached to the city, the approach I followed also enables an understanding of how urban residents seek to re-conquer what dominant representations had deprived them of – their essential ‘right’ to the city: to *imagine* it otherwise. Being able to imagine one’s own life, narratives and relations within urban space is not only a sweet dream, but a vital right for the *cityzens* to exist and appropriate urban space, for *urbanity* to subsist, and for the city to live. There is nothing such as ‘the’ divided city; there are as many alternative cities as there are individuals who *inhabit* the city. Rather than assuming their existence, a better way to understand ‘urban divisions’ is to give voice to people often marginalised in sectarian competition for power and studies of them.

As advocated in my methodology, this perspective requires an ethnographic approach to understanding the city, not only as a place of power, but also as a lived environment. Sibley (1995:184) has argued that ‘post-modern discourse does not bring the academic writer closer to the ‘other’ if there is no real engagement. [...] the question of making human geography radical and emancipatory partly [is] a question of getting close to other people, listening to them, making way for them.’ In the case of urban or social divisions, the analyst should first attempt to go beyond and against divisions, and seek to come closer to the people who are concerned by these borders on a daily basis. In order to challenge usually unquestioned categories and concepts, I would suggest that it is necessary to reduce the distance between the researcher and the participant and for the former in some sense to *care* for the latter. Such an experience may be disconcerting and carry ethical and analytical risks but, borrowing methods from other disciplines, such as the psychoanalytical theory advocated by Sibley, it might, despite risks of misrecognition, projection or over-identification, allow the geographer to understand better the perceptions and feelings of the other, as well as the constructions which are likely to influence our research. This is where participatory approaches to research have much to contribute. They share common characteristics with Debord’s psychogeography. Psychogeography has been conceived as a means, not only to analyse urban phenomena, but also to change them, by bringing together critical research, activism and artistic practice. To Pinder (2003:386-387), this involves ‘practices of studying, representing and telling stories about cities, [...] ways of sensing, feeling and experiencing their spaces differently, [...] contesting “proper” orderings of space to allow something “other” to emerge.’ These collaborative, participatory approaches of exploring urban space give more voice to residents as *cityzens*, that is to say, as active

actors of their environment, and find an echo in contemporary concerns with rethinking cities.

An avenue for further research would be to identify other cases of *dividing* cities, that is to say cities where divisions are not spatially materialised but which are nonetheless marked by various processes of separation of its space and society. In Macedonia, for instance, it would be interesting to explore the cases of Tetovo or Kumanovo, two cities of northern-Macedonia, close to the Kosovo border. Both are multiethnic, with 25 percent of the population being Albanian, and significant Roma and Serbian minorities. Both are affected by processes of interethnic separation in urban space, which explains why they are often referred to as ‘divided cities’. History suggests that these divisions are quite recent, and that they are perceived as such since 2001. Analysing these municipalities, not as divided cities, but as dividing ones, would allow us to better understand the processes by which cities may become divided. It could also be interesting to explore other cities in the Balkans, in particular in South Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yet, in most cases, because of the 1990s and 2000s open conflicts, either these cities are already labelled as ‘divided’, such as Mitrovica, Sarajevo or Mostar, or they have already undergone a process of homogenisation of their populations and spaces which, from multiethnic spaces, made them monoethnic. A topic for further research might be to consider the extent to which the analysis developed in this thesis applies in other allegedly divided cities.

This issue actually raises another question: should geographers rather research dividing processes in ‘undivided’ as well as in ‘divided’ cities, to bring them closer together? In the Balkans, this could be done, for instance, by studying the above Serbian and Bosnian cities, along with examples of multiethnic ‘successes’, such as Brcko, a small city in north-east Bosnia which remained multicultural and where communities have maintained good relations. This could also be extended to other geographies and other cases of ‘divided’ and ‘undivided’ cities in the world.

The reflection on the concept of divided city and the need to question taken-for-granted representations, which underlies my thesis, also provides a basis for extending research. As seen in Chapter 1, the notion of divided city is often associated with that of the ‘contested state’ (Anderson, 2008) to designate cities combining the issue of ethnic divisions and struggles over state legitimacy. A further avenue for further research would be to develop the methods I followed and the conclusions I reached on the

divided city in relation to the issue of divided societies. Exploring the impact of the *representations* of division and departing from the prism of sectarian narratives could offer a new perspective on conflictual situations and places for the researcher. Such an approach would also have practical implications in terms of decision-making and conflict resolution. In Macedonia, the 2001 Ohrid Agreement may have put an end to the civil war, but it resulted in an essentialisation of identities and the division of Macedonian society into self-contained entities, ‘the Macedonians’ and ‘the Albanians’. This essentialism, contained in international representations, is precisely what Campbell (1998) was questioning in the case of Bosnia Herzegovina. While The Ohrid Agreement initial version favoured a civic understanding of national identities, the final document reflects the deterministic representations forged by ethno-national leaders. Instead of amending the Constitution in a sense that only referred to the republic in terms of citizenship and no longer in terms of ethnic belonging, the Agreement was thus forced by Macedonian political pressure to reincorporate the terms ‘Macedonian people’ and ‘Albanian people’ in the Constitution Preamble. Lacking an analysis of non-ethnic sources of conflict, the Agreement officialised the republic as a bi-ethnic state, at the detriment of other minorities and other modes of identities. Questioning the legitimacy of the ethnic prism applies as much to the case of the divided city as to that of divided states and societies. This reflection would imply a rethinking of some of the solutions commonly proposed by the international community in order to solve ‘ethnic’ conflicts. The understanding of divisions, not as a static reality, but as undergoing process, indeed sheds light on the role played by these ‘solutions’ in *dividing* – and not already *divided* – societies. Rather than ratifying divisions through territorial partition or consociational models of government, it would involve supporting integrated, civic-oriented resolutions of conflict, which focus on developing civil society and interethnic dialogue.



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## TRANSLITERATION AND WRITING

The Macedonian language is written in the Cyrillic alphabet. I have employed the standard international scientific transliteration system used by Slavicists.

### *Pronunciation of the transliteration:*

g (г) is pronounced /g/ as is **goat**

ǵ (ѓ) is pronounced /ʒ/ as in **argue**

e (е) is pronounced /ɛ/ as in **bed** or French *dé* (depending on the vowel's place in the word)

ž (ж) is pronounced /ʒ/ as in **vision**

dž (џ) is pronounced /z/ as in **July**

u (у) is pronounced /u/ as in French **loup**

dz (ѕ) is pronounced /dz/ as /d/ of **bed** + /z/ of **size**

j (ј) is pronounced /j/ as in **you**

lj (љ) is pronounced /lj/ as in French **lieu**

nj (њ) is pronounced /nj/ as in French **agneau**

s (с) is pronounced /s/ as in **Skopje**

kj (ќ) is pronounced /c/ as in Low German **kjoakj**

h (х) is pronounced /x/ as in German **nach**

ts (ц) is pronounced /ts/ as in German **zehn**

č (ч) is pronounced /tʃ/ as in **bleach**

š (ш) is pronounced /ʃ/ as in **shopping**

### *Writing*

In the bibliography, I have retained authors' spellings for works published in Latin and transliterated Cyrillic titles. We will hence find *Vucinich* instead of *Vucinič*, and both *Charshya* and *Čaršija*.

## INTERVIEWS

### List of semi-directive interviews:

- 14/06/2010 – Dr. in Architecture, public university
- 16/09/2010 – Head of Department, Municipality of Skopje.
- 18/09/2010 – Dr. in Social Sciences, private institute
- 21/09/2010 – Head of Department, Municipality of Skopje
- 21/09/2010 – Director, NGO
- 21/09/2010 – Member, NGO
- 22/09/2010 – Former Chief Foreign Policy Advisor
- 23/09/2010 – Director, NGO
- 27/09/2010 – Former Minister of Environment and Social Planning
- 30/09/2010 – Project officer, NGO
- 29/09/2010 – Architect
- 30/09/2010 – Executive Director, NGO
- 01/10/2010 – Director, NGO
- 03/10/2010 – Research Analyst, private institute
- 06/10/2010 – member, NGO
- 12/06/2011 – Former presidential candidate
- 15/10/2010 – Architect
- 15/10/2010 – Architect
- 18/10/2010 – Director, public administration
- 18/10/2010 – Director, public administration
- 04/06/2011 and 10/08/2011 – Director, NGO
- 08/07/2011 – Vice-Dean, private university
- 09/08/2011 – Director, NGO
- 16/06/2011 – Waitress
- 20/06/2011 – Waitress
- 20/06/2011 – Waiter
- 20/06/2011 – Waiter
- 21/06/2011 – Waitress
- 21/06/2011 – Waiter
- 23/06/2011 – Waitress
- 23/06/2011 – Waiter
- 06/07/2011 – Artist
- 11/08/2011 – Research-Assistant, public university
- 15/06/2011 – Waiter

## List of open-ended interviews:

- M., Macedonian, student in Architecture
- L., Macedonian, economist-accountant
- V., Macedonian, lives in Sofia
- D., Macedonian, teacher and engineer
- N., Macedonian, student in Architecture
- R., Bulgarian visiting a friend in Skopje
- G., Bulgarian visiting a friend in Skopje
- M., Bulgarian visiting a friend in Skopje
- K., Serbo-Macedonian, student
- J., Macedonian, retired
- O., Macedonian, PhD candidate
- N., Macedonian, professor
- S., Roma, NGO program coordinator
- A., Roma, student
- D., Macedonian, student in Architecture
- G., Italian, OECD
- R., Italian, internship in Skopje
- K., Albanian, head of public institution
- A., Macedonian, PhD
- B., Macedonian, student
- F., Macedonian, musician
- J., Macedonian, PhD
- R., Macedonian, retired
- D., Macedonian, retired
- R., Macedonian, member of VMRO-NP<sup>1</sup>
- L., Macedonian, journalist
- H., Macedonian, journalist
- D., Serbian, cleaning lady
- B., Macedonian, employee at Ministry of Education
- V., Macedonian, retired
- V., Macedonian, estate agent
- G., Macedonian, shopkeeper
- H., Macedonian, shopkeeper
- S., German, NGO member
- H., Albanian, NGO member
- O., Macedonian, PhD student
- G., Macedonian, student in Architecture

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<sup>1</sup> *Внатрешна Македонска Револуционерна Организација-Народна Партија* ou *Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija-Narodna Partija*, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–People's Party, a conservative political party formed by the followers of the former Prime Minister Ljubčo Georgievski who split from the VMRO–DPMNE in 2004.

- Z., Macedonian, ambassador
- L., Macedonian, retired
- K., Macedonian, PhD candidate
- A., Vlach, policy expert
- M., Macedonian, NGO
- M., Vlach, retired
- P., Albanian, unemployed
- J., Albanian, Čaršija shopkeeper
- K., Albanian, Čaršija shopkeeper
- P., Turk, Čaršija shopkeeper
- M., Turk, Čaršija shopkeeper
- M., Albanian, Čaršija shopkeeper
- B., French, journalist
- X., Macedo-Albanian, NGO member
- A., Macedonian, VMRO youth leader
- P., Macedonian, VMRO youth leader
- M., Greek, researcher
- L., Macedonian, PhD candidate
- x., Macedonian, policeman
- x., Roma, unemployed
- x., Macedonian, entrepreneur from Bitola
- x., Macedonian, teacher from Bitola
- x., Macedonian, student
- x., Macedonian, student
- x., Albanian, journalist
- x., Albanian, profession unknown
- x., Serbian, profession unknown
- x., Macedonian living in the US
- x., Macedonian living in the US
- x., Macedonian living in the US
- x., Macedonian, profession unknown
- x., Macedonian, retired
- x., Macedonian, unemployed
- x., Albanian, student
- x., Albanian, student
- x., Albanian, pupil
- x., Macedonian, taxi-driver
- x., Serbian, taxi-driver

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

*This document is a translation of the original Macedonian questionnaires*

*This project aims to explore the common habits and behaviours of Skopjani in cafés, bars and restaurants of Skopje's city centre. You are free to take part in this study and can withdraw at any time without having to give any explanations. Results and personal data are strictly anonymous. Data will be collected and stored in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998 and the 2005 Law on Protection of Personal Data of the Republic of Macedonia. Thank you for your interest and your participation in this research.*

### Personal Characteristics

**1 – Date and place of birth:**

.....

**2 – Hometown / Municipality :**

.....

**3 – Gender:**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

**4 – Nationality**

.....

**5 – Languages**

*(if possible, underline your mother tongue)*

.....

**6 – Ethnicity:**

- ☐ Macedonia
- ☐ Albanian
- ☐ Roma
- ☐ Turk
- ☐ Other:

.....

**7 – Employment status:**

- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Retiree
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Working student

**8 – Employment sector:**

- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Craftsman / Business / entrepreneur
- ☐ Executive / intellectual profession
- ☐ Employee
- ☐ Worker
- ☐ Other: .....

**9 – Level of education:**

- ☐ Primary school
- ☐ Secondary school
- ☐ High school
- ☐ Undergraduate
- ☐ Master
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Other: .....

## Cafés, bars and restaurants of the city centre

### 1- How often do you go to this café / bar / restaurant?

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ 1-2 / week
- ☐ 1-2 / month
- ☐ 1-2 / year
- ☐ It is the first time
- ☐ Other:

.....

### 2 – How often do you go to this part of town?

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ 1-2 / week
- ☐ 1-2 / month
- ☐ 1-2 / year
- ☐ It is the first time
- ☐ Other:

.....

### 3 – Are you here with...?

- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Colleagues
- ☐ Relatives
- ☐ Alone
- ☐ Other:

.....

### 4 – How long do you plan to stay?

- ☐ Less than 15 minutes
- ☐ 15-30 minutes
- ☐ Between 30 minutes and 1 hour
- ☐ More than 1 hour
- ☐ I don't know

### 5 - Are you satisfied with this café/bar/restaurant?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Moderately satisfied
- ☐ Not really satisfied
- ☐ Unsatisfied
- ☐ I don't know

### 5bis – Why?

### 6 - Are you satisfied with the surrounding environment and part of town?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Moderately satisfied
- ☐ Not really satisfied
- ☐ Unsatisfied
- ☐ I don't know

### 7bis – Why?

### 8 – Is your level of satisfaction linked with the recent urban changes in the centre?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

**9 – In which way have the recent urban changes influenced your choice to come here?**

- ☐ In a positive way
- ☐ In a negative way
- ☐ No influence
- ☐ I don't know

**10 – Could you explain whether the recent urban changes may influence your choice of cafés/bars/restaurants?**

**11 – What is your opinion about the recent urban changes in this part of town?**

**12 – Do you go more often to the cafés/bars/restaurants located in this part of town or in the Stara Čaršija?**

- ☐ Here (around Macedonia Square)
- ☐ In the Stara Čaršija
- ☐ As much here as in the SC
- ☐ I don't know

**12bis – Why?**

**13 – How often do you go to the cafés/bars/restaurants of the Stara Čaršija?**

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ 1-2 / week
- ☐ 1-2 / month
- ☐ 1-2 / year
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Other

**14 – How often do you go to the Stara Čaršija in general?**

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ 1-2 / week
- ☐ 1-2 / month
- ☐ 1-2 / year
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Other

**15 – In the past, did you use to go to the Stara Čaršija...?**

- ☐ More often
- ☐ Less often
- ☐ Same as now

**16 – Could you give some reasons to explain your changes of habits?**

**17 – Do you consider the Stara Čaršija as...?**

- ☐ Less safe than Macedonia Square and Centar
- ☐ As safe as Macedonia Square and Centar
- ☐ Safer than Macedonia Square and Centar
- ☐ I don't know

**17bis - Why?**

**18 – Would you say that Skopje has two different centres: one around Macedonia Square and one around the Stara Čaršija?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

**18bis – Could you justify your answer?**

**19 – Of the two, where do you feel the more comfortable?**

**20 – According to you, is Skopje synonym with...?**

- ☐ Cosmopolitanism
- ☐ Fragmentation
- ☐ Other:

**20bis - Could you justify your answer?**



